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ABSTRACT

These 4 issues of the English Leadership Quarterly comprise volume 16, published during 1994. Articles in number 1 deal with practical advice, and include: "The Law of Privacy and the Writing Teacher" (Ben T. Allen); Beware of Teachers Who Laminate Their Lesson Plans and Other Useful Suggestions about Teaching" (Robert Perrin); "Firefighter, Cook, Pack Rat, Teacher: Advice for Chairs" (Mary M. Licklider); Dependence and Grade Inflation: A Vicious Cycle" (Candace O'Donnell); "When Models Collide" (Diana Dreyer); "Writing the Mall" (John S. Simmons); "When Does a Vulgarity Become an Obscenity?" (Carol Jago); and "The First Six Minutes" (Terrie St. Michel). Articles in number 2 deal with innovations and classic ideas, and include: "The Standards Movement Explained and Considered" (Jim Burke); "A Classic Assignment" (Rick Chambers); "Local Color--Local Voices: A Focus for Student Research" (Rocky Colavito); "One Teacher's Odyssey toward Better Teaching" (Joy Marks Gray); and "The Appreciative Focus in the Listening Curriculum" (Constance L. Hoag and Maurine V. Richardson). Articles in number 3 present case studies in English leadership and include "Professional Growth through Supervision" (Daniel A. Heller); "Losing the Chair: Whose Seat Is It, Anyway?" (Ted Lehmann); and "A Whole Language Vision" (Alyce Hunter). Articles in number 4 deal with the promise and paradox of national standards, and include "Goals 2000 Adds New Issues to the Standards Movement" (Miles Myers); "The Edison Project: New Standards for New Schools" (Francie Alexander); "The Language Arts Standards Project: A Professional and Community-Based Collaboration" (Charlotte Higuchi); and "Looking Back: A Local Standards Project That Failed" (Larry Crapse). (RS)

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ENGLISH LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY, 1994, Volume 16

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Leadership for Excellence

ENGLISH LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY

Conference on English Leadership

Volume 16, Number 1
February 1994
Editor: James Strickland

In This Issue

PRACTICAL ADVICE

by James Strickland, editor

Let me offer a bit of advice. The funny thing about advice is that everyone feels qualified to give it, while no one feels obligated to take it. Still, I have some advice. But first I'd like to tell two stories, both involving a teacher I know, Amy, who works with institutionalized children.

Blake was an unusual student, even in a class of emotionally disturbed adolescents. He was a walking demolition man, destroying everything he touched. If someone gave him a new pair of pants, he ripped them. If someone gave him a game, he broke it. His school books, notebooks, pens—all looked as if they'd been recovered from a disaster site. Counseling and therapy didn't help; he treated everything with disdain. At some point in the year, Amy gave him a copy of an S. E. Hinton novel, *The Outsiders*, I believe. For weeks, Blake carried that book around with him in perfect condition, though it was obviously being read. Finally Amy couldn't stand it any longer and asked the obvious: "Blake, how come nothing's happened to the book?" He looked at her and simply answered, "No one ever gave me anything that was worth anything before."

My other story involves Amy and Theodore Taylor, author of *The Cay* and other popular works of adolescent literature. Two years ago at NCTE's Annual Convention, while I was having Ted Taylor autograph a copy of his book for Amy, I told him about how she had been using *The Cay* as part of her literature-based unit on the Caribbean, mentioning in particular how much the students had loved the characters and some of the writing activities. Taylor's eyes sparkled, and he said to have the students write to him, scribbling his address on the back of an advertisement for his latest book. The students were excited by the idea of writing to an author, though they rightfully conceived of themselves as authors too, having published their own tales of shark attacks and adventures on a life raft. Asking specific and authentic questions, they approached the letter writing as a genuine activity, not as an exercise in sending fan mail. And Taylor wrote back, sending individual letters in response to individual queries. This year at the Annual Convention, while Amy had Taylor autograph a copy of the sequel to *The Cay*, she reminded him of the letter-writing exchange and told him how much it had meant to her students. One boy, Sean, still carried Taylor's letter with him in his wallet, two years later, a little tattered from reading and refolding, but still intact, still with him wherever he went. Taylor understood.

So, my advice: Give students something valuable, truly valuable, and work and talk with them in authentic ways about meaningful things. Let school boards worry about the rest of the nonsense.

The authors in this issue offer more advice. You are free, of course, not to follow any of it, but all of it is worth considering.

Ben Allen, a member of the California State Bar Association since 1973, has been a criminal prosecutor and, in private practice, a civil litigator. Currently a professor of business administration

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at Humboldt State University, Ben is concerned that the practice of sharing students' writings is done at the teacher's risk of liability for invasion of students' privacy. He offers one attorney's view in "The Law of Privacy and the Writing Teacher." As many readers will know from consulting with lawyers, Ben's advice represents one opinion. Another lawyer might reasonably be expected to support the practice of publishing student writings as long as the student retains control over the subject matter and is aware from the start of the writing's primary and secondary audiences. Don't be surprised if a case such as this ends up on *L.A. Law*.

Robert Perrin, a frequent contributor from Indiana State University, offers much more mundane advice in "Beware of Teachers Who Laminate Their Lesson Plans and Other Useful Suggestions about Teaching." Expect counsel on keeping accurate records, making careful but flexible plans, simplifying classroom rules, sharing ideas with others, resisting fads, staying fresh, and other practical matters.

Mary M. Licklider of Rock Bridge High School in Columbia, Missouri, sees her role as language arts chair as that of "Firefighter, Cook, Pack Rat, Teacher," though not necessarily in that order. Her article offers some practical advice for those assuming the multifaceted demands of leadership positions in English and the language arts.

When Candace O'Donnell, an English teacher at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania, first wrote to me with her article about the relationship between grade inflation and dependence in writers, I thought of Donald Graves's advice about getting students off writer's welfare, encouraging them to take more and more responsibility for their decisions. But something in Candace's article bothered me, and I wrote asking her to clarify the main point and to perhaps adjust the tone of the piece. The alternative was to couple it with another piece offering an opposing view. Candace wrote back, "I'd like to take you up on your offer to print the piece, as is, as one half of a debate. . . . I've concluded that . . . my theories are controversial and would provide a catalyst for a lively debate."

For the other half of the debate, I turned to my colleague Diana Dreyer. Students, often noticing that our classes seem to reinforce each other, frequently ask if we plan our classes together. I just tell them that we share the same philosophy of learning. I knew I could impose on Diana to write the piece, and I was confident that her essay, which she titled "When Models Collide," would express the concerns I felt. Read Candace's and Diana's essays together. Better yet, make them the subject for a department debate.

John S. Simmons, professor of English education and reading at Florida State University, has revived the time-honored field trip and made its destination the mall. Any mall in the United States will do for John and his students as they use their powers of observation and reflection to discover subjects for writing.

Carol Jago, who shall henceforth be known as the "award-winning author from Santa Monica High School in California," follows with "When Does a Vulgarity Become an Obscenity?" In this article, she offers some brief advice about censorship and good sense.

Another frequent contributor, Terrie St. Michel of South Mountain High School in Phoenix, concludes with her advice about what she does with "The First Six Minutes" of every class.

Finally, if none of this advice seems to help, you may want to try "Dear Abby" or our own Sue Benjamin's *Survival Kit for Teachers and Parents*.

THE LAW OF PRIVACY AND THE WRITING TEACHER

by Ben T. Allen
Humboldt State University, Arcata, California

A common pedagogy among English teachers involves sharing the writing of their students: reading papers to the class, putting writings on bulletin boards, placing student compositions in anthologies, sharing student writings with parents. Nonetheless, this pedagogy, though effective, should be balanced with students' right of privacy. Failure to do so violates this right and may result in liability.

Consider these six examples: (1) a fifteen-year-old girl writes about her abortion; (2) a high school student writes about a particularly emotional moment as a young child; (3) an eighteen-year-old writes of current despondency at the ending of a personal relationship; (4) a twenty-year-old college student writes about the sexual practices of a friend but changes the name of the friend so that the material appears to be fictional; (5) an eighteen-year-old high school boy writes about the nudity and bisexuality practiced by his parents in the family home; (6) a seven-year-old girl writes about physical and sexual abuse in the home. Will a teacher violate the students' right of privacy by sharing these writings? What should a teacher do with the information? Can a teacher avoid liability by obtaining a signed waiver or consent?

The laws regarding the right of privacy and the concomitant liability for invasion of privacy are developing rapidly as legislatures and courts—in an effort to define the limits of permitted intrusion into our lives—examine such diverse issues as abortion, sexual preference, dying, surrogate parenting, and drug and psychological testing in the workplace. To assist other faculty members in the process of balancing pedagogy and privacy and to decrease the likelihood of liability for invasion of privacy, I will, as an experienced attorney and professor, explain one portion of the total realm of privacy and provide guidelines for determining appropriate circumstances for sharing students' writings. I will also discuss the validity of student consent forms and other waivers of rights.

Throughout this article, I will use the term *to publish* to include any communication to a third party, that is, anyone other than the teacher or the writer. Thus, *to publish* includes, but is not limited to, sharing papers among students, reading papers in the classroom, placing writings in public view, and including writings in anthologies.

I will address two questions: (1) Do teachers violate students' right of privacy by publishing students' writings? (2) If a student grants permission to publish, does the teacher avoid liability for invasion of privacy?

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The Law of Privacy

Current law does not answer categorically the question of whether teachers violate students' right of privacy by publishing student papers. Rather, the evolving principles of privacy must be applied in each situation to determine whether there is liability.

The laws regarding invasion of privacy protect our right to be *let alone,* our right to be able to live our lives without unreasonable intrusion by the government or by other people. Our privacy is ours and not the business of others. (The law of privacy has several sources, including constitutions, statutes, agency or district policy, and court decisions. A brief overview of these and of the history of privacy law is included in an appendix.)

Under the legal theory of the "public disclosure of private facts," the principles that have evolved are that we have a right not to be publicly embarrassed and not to have private information communicated publicly. We are not protected, however, if the information is "newsworthy." Thus, a balancing or judgment process is required to protect both an individual's privacy and the First Amendment right of freedom of the press—and the benefit that the public gets from receiving the information.

There are four questions that courts and juries examine in determining liability, questions that teachers should review in making their decisions:

1. Is the information private?
2. Is it intimate?
3. Is it embarrassing or offensive to a reasonable person?
4. What is the necessity of or benefit gained by the publication in relationship to the harm caused?

In order to prevail in a lawsuit based on publication by a teacher, a student must prove that a public disclosure of a private fact about the student occurred, that the fact was offensive and objectionable to a reasonable person, and that the fact was not of a legitimate public concern.

A case that illustrates the application of these concepts involved a newspaper that published an article about a woman who was the student-body president of a community college. The woman was also a transsexual, having undergone gender corrective surgery. The court found the newspaper and its reporter liable for $775,000 for disclosure of this information. Other instances of publication that provide a basis for understanding the potential liability for teachers include the release of medical information by a doctor, publishing the identity of sexual assault victim, and the distribution of a purported work of fiction containing intimate information based on real persons and events.

Some Guidelines for Determining Whether to Publish

Teachers must decide what disclosure is appropriate when they publish students' writing. Here are some guidelines to assist in that decision:

1. When in doubt, protect privacy and do not disclose.
2. Examine the nature of class assignments to determine if they are likely to elicit private or intimate information and determine whether that information is necessary to achieve your pedagogical goal.
3. Be careful about placing students in peer situations that cause pressure on them to read aloud or otherwise share their writing. If you are committed to this type of sharing, make it clear that students have the option not to share, without consequence. (Issues regarding the validity of student consent to this and other activities are discussed below.)
4. Do not place student papers that include grades or comments or private information in a place of public viewing, such as in stacks to be sorted through or passed back by students or on bulletin boards. (Although posting of grades is not the subject of this article, teachers should note that publicly displaying grades with identifying names or marks that allow knowledge of the particular student is also a violation of privacy law.)
5. When determining whether the privacy of material should be protected, consider the following: Is the information intimate or embarrassing? Is the information of general knowledge or personal to the writer? Would you like someone to know this information about you? What benefit might be gained by sharing the information, and does that benefit outweigh potential harm? Is this a writing based on actual events and people that purports to be a fiction? If so, can the true characters or events be identified by other students?
6. Remember that, after the fact, lawyers, judges, and juries might be examining your decision.

Illustrative Applications of the Law

Based upon the considerations discussed above, what should a teacher do in the case of the previously presented examples?

Example 1: If a fifteen-year-old girl writes about her abortion, it very likely falls within the realm of privacy and should not be published. The critical factors are the age of the girl, the intimacy and potential embarrassment of the situation, and the lack of benefit gained by publishing. This information would seem to be personal to the student and of limited pedagogical benefit to any other person.

Example 2: If a high school student writes about a particularly emotional moment as a young child, the content, even though it shares an intimate event, does not likely fall within privacy protection, unless the student expresses or implies some embarrassment or need for confidentiality. The benefits of sharing the commonality of personal and emotional experience outweigh the privacy aspects.

Example 3: If an eighteen-year-old writes of current despondency at the ending of a personal relationship, the situation likely resides within the area of privacy because it is personal and current to the writer. In other words, this situation has less universality and resultant teaching benefit and more personal and intimate content than the situation in example 2.

Example 4: If a twenty-year-old college student writes about the sexual practices of a friend and changes the name of the friend so that the material appears to be fictional, and if the material is intimate and embarrassing, publication will violate the privacy of the friend. Thus, even though this writing might purport to be fiction (and we cannot often distinguish whether it is fiction or not), the privacy of the third party is violated by the student writer and by a teacher who publishes this information. Be particularly alert in this context, because students know each other and know about events and can therefore often identify purportedly fictitious characters.

Example 5: If an eighteen-year-old high school boy writes about the nudity and bisexuality practiced by his parents in the family home, it clearly falls within the realm of right of privacy for the student and for the student's parents. This information is private and may be embarrassing to the student. The pedagogical benefit of publishing is small compared to the importance of privacy. In addition, a teacher risks liability to the parents in this situation because of invasion of their privacy. If the case involved an eight-year-old student, however, the situation might require, depending upon the nature of the student's words, a mandatory report of child abuse, as discussed below.

Example 6: If a seven-year-old child writes about physical and sexual abuse in the home, it must be disclosed under mandatory child abuse statutes, regardless of privacy. By law, the need for disclosure and protection of the child outweighs the right of privacy. Teachers need to be aware of their state's laws regarding mandatory child abuse reporting. For example, California law mandates that teachers report such situations to child protective agencies and provides immunity from liability.

Consents to Disclosure

Many believe that if there is a risk of liability, it can be avoided by having students consent to publishing. But consent depends on various factors.

An adult can waive the right of privacy by agreeing to disclosure, that is, by granting permission to publish. This waiver can occur expressly by signing consent forms or by agreeing orally. Consent also can occur implicitly by voluntarily participating in an activity. An adult in such a context is generally any person who is over the age of eighteen and who has the reasonable capacity of an adult. If a person is an adult and consents to disclosure, no liability exists.

Yet what appears to be a consent to disclosure may not be. The risk that arises in an adult student and teacher situation is that a power differential exists which can vitiate the consent. Students and teachers do not have the same power in a classroom. When a teacher says, "I'm going to read these papers in class" or "Each of you is now going to read your paper to the class" or "I'm going to put these on the bulletin board for sharing," students may fail to object because they are concerned about poor grades or other consequences. Their failure to object in this situation is not an implied waiver; failure to say "no" does not mean "yes." These same concepts can apply when a student signs a written consent. This express consent will be invalid if the student is signing because of express or implied pressure from the teacher.

Minors cannot legally waive their right of privacy. Therefore, any consent from a minor, express or implied, is invalid. If the material would reasonably be considered private, teachers should not disclose regardless of any form of consent. Additionally, parents generally cannot legally waive the rights of their children. Therefore, any consent, signed or implied, from a minor's parents has no effect. Teachers should not rely on forms containing parent's signatures.

Guidelines for Effective Adult Consents

Here are some guidelines to follow to have an effective adult consent for disclosure:

1. Be certain that students are informed that they have the right not to have information disclosed. Discuss this openly and often in class.
2. Do not have any consequence, expressed or implied, that would result from the denial of disclosure. Watch out for subtle pressure to compel students to disclose or share their writing. Avoid saying such things to a class as "Well, it looks like Bob is the only one who is not sharing his writing today" or "I'm sure that we all want to share our papers today" or "Okay, table 3 students will now read their papers to the class."
3. Never openly discuss, post, or otherwise publicly display material which might invade privacy based on the lack of objection by a student. Remember that lack of objection is not necessarily consent.
4. Liability can occur for purported works of fiction which tell a true story. If a student has consented to the publishing of a story that is about some other person, the consent has no effect on that third person. In other words, even though the writer consents, the person who is the character in the story can sue.

Conclusion

As society becomes more complex and intrusive, the right of privacy is expanding to provide a shield to defend our right to be let alone. And as this occurs, liability for invasion of privacy is increasing. Accordingly, we must exercise judgment in the application of pedagogy and in the balancing of students' rights. To do so requires wisdom, which is in part based on experience and on knowledge of legal responsibility.

Appendix: A Brief Overview of Privacy Law

The legal concept of privacy was recognized initially in 1890 in an article written by Professor Louis Brandeis, later a Supreme Court Justice. Yet privacy did not become a recognized and enforced body of law until 1965, when the Supreme Court held that a right of privacy is implied in the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution. Thus, even though the word *privacy* is never actually mentioned in the Constitution, the Supreme Court held that privacy is an inalienable right in the United States. This precedent became the foundation of privacy rights.

Some states also provide a constitutional basis for the right of privacy. For example, the California Constitution provides specifically for an inalienable right of privacy in article 1, section 1. Based on this section, courts have held that the right of privacy applies to minors (generally any person under age eighteen) as well as to adults.

State and federal legislatures have also passed statutes to provide some limited protection of privacy. For example, the Federal Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 522a) and the Family Education and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) regulate government recordkeeping regarding citizens and determine who can obtain access to these records. In California, the "Privacy of Student Records Act" (Education Code, section 67140 et seq.) limits disclosure of college students' grades. In addition, statutes have been enacted to prevent violation of privacy in such areas as disclosure of bank records, cable television records, video store records, and tax records.

Agency or district policy also may regulate teacher conduct in this area. Teachers should examine the policies of their institutions and districts to determine if local policies regarding the privacy of student writings exist and should comply with those policies that do currently exist. In my experience and observation, however, most districts either do not have policies or have a very general policy that offers little guidance.

A Brief Annotated Bibliography

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BEWARE OF TEACHERS WHO LAMINATE THEIR LESSON PLANS AND OTHER USEFUL SUGGESTIONS ABOUT TEACHING

by Robert Perrin
Indiana State University

I still remember my first day of full-time teaching—not student teaching under the protection of Glennie Plath, but teaching on my own, in my first real job, with my own classroom, my own desk, and my own students. I was a young-looking twenty-one. It was a sultry September day in a building without air conditioning, my sophomores were boisterous, my supplies were insufficient, and I had a new haircut that I didn't like very much. After six straight periods of classes, with a half-hour lunch squeezed in, I flopped on the couch in the teachers' lounge and took off my tie. Then I remembered that I needed some materials from the library. Dragging myself off the couch, I headed down the hallway—only to get stopped for not having a hall pass. Thank goodness I laughed.

Twenty-two years have passed since then, and I've learned a great deal about myself, about students, about administrators, about school systems, and about teaching. Some of the things I've learned, I've learned easily, instinctively; some I've learned through simple trial and error; some I've learned through repeated mishaps, reassessments, and struggles. So now, in a true evangelical spirit, I'd like to share some of this information in the hope that it will help others avoid some of my teaching traumas.

Beware of Teachers Who Laminate Their Lesson Plans

Every school has at least one teacher—some lucky schools have more—who has reached such a state of teaching perfection that he or she can enshrine lesson plans in plastic. You should be alert to the terrors that these teachers inflict, because, having reached teaching nirvana themselves, they may try to drag you along too. Perhaps they'll offer sage advice that only they (or so they think) can give, or mistake good typing for good teaching, or make you feel unjustly paranoid because you still haven't figured out what to do with your ten o'clock class. The worst quality of laminated teachers is that once they "get it right," they never modify or change anything—not even their hairstyles.

Keep Accurate Records

This old saw from methods class is absolutely true. Keep clear attendance records; maintain accounts of late work; record all grades, major and minor; transcribe averages along with final grades. Nothing is quite as impressive or as helpful as a well-kept gradebook when, on the up side, you need to write a letter of recommendation a year after having a student or, on the down side, you need to have a parent-teacher conference. Let me suggest one more thing: make sure that your records can be deciphered by students, administrators, and parents—real people, not just cryptographers and pedagogical archeologists.

Plan Carefully, But Expect to Vary from Your Plans

In one sense, methods teachers are correct about the importance of planning: a well-planned course that keeps students actively involved in learning eliminates many of the problems that occur in unfocused classes. Yet there's a wrinkle that most methods teachers seem not to have realized: school systems have a way of interrupting a teacher's predetermined schedule.

So plan your courses carefully, but, in anticipation of "unforeseen complications," block in an "open day" every two weeks. That way you'll have time to spare when the principal calls an assembly so that your British literature class can listen to the guy who used to whistle the theme songs from *Lassie, Andy of Mayberry,* and *Hang 'em High.* And, on the off chance that no pep assembly, substance-abuse program by ex-drug mavens, or get-your-class-ring promotion seems to appear, you can always use the open days for class discussions that are educationally sound.

Don't Have Too Many Rules

We've all known teachers who have rules for everything: chairs must line up with the floor tiles before a class can be dismissed, rough drafts must be written in blue ink and final drafts in black, dates must be written in day-month-year order, no one can use the pencil sharpener during a test, and so on. In fact, some teachers have such expansive lists of classroom rules and procedures that an entire double-wide bulletin board and two days of class time must be used to explain them, resulting in an atmosphere akin to United Nations negotiations.

The problem is that such an array of rules is almost impossible for adolescents to remember. And when every situation has a rule, the "big" rules get lost. So simplify matters. Decide which rules are truly important—five or ten that have to do with courtesy and order will be about right—and let the others go. Let someone who isn't interested in kids or teaching worry about how many staples someone gets to use each hour.

Share Good Ideas

Too often, the only ones who benefit from our good ideas are our students. Actually, that's not so bad, because these days that can be as many as 150 people. But it's also a shame, because many more people could benefit from our good ideas, not just the ones the computer chose to be students in our classes.

So be open—everywhere you can—about your large and small classroom successes. Chat with colleagues in the lounge, present a conference paper, write an article, or, if you ever get to visit the country club, tell a school board member. Small successes, like discovering a way to get Shanna to bring a pencil three days in a row, may lead to big successes, like arranging for Jason to finish his research paper at the boy's home. Trust me. Good ideas are not that common, so you should spread yours around.

Acknowledge That You Might Not Like All Students

We've been trained to believe that we should like all of our students. But as long as teachers are human beings, that simply won't happen. Whether it's the smart-ass in the back row, the goofy giggler near the window, or the kiss-up who's grubbing for a better grade than he or she deserves, some students will be, quite simply, impossible to like. Honesty is important in dealing with these students—honesty with ourselves, I mean—to ensure that we don't overcompensate in our attempts to avoid penalizing this student and, in our own generous way, let them get away with too much. We should avoid the I-don't-like-Pat-so-I-must-be-generous-to-be-fair gambit, particularly in grading. Find a colleague who doesn't know the student and have him or her review your grading. Chances are the grades will be too high, which isn't fair to the other students.

Have Friends Who Aren't Teachers

Although it's cathartic to hash through the horrors of the school day with someone who understands exactly what it means to try to teach—that is, another teacher—it can also perpetuate neurotic, self-indulgent, unimaginative behavior: you say, "I can't believe the assistant principal said, 'Blah, blah, blah' "; your teaching friend replies, "What a jerk." It's a simple, self-reflexive dialogue.

You will have at least two enjoyable challenges if you locate and try to keep friends who aren't teachers. First, you may actually have to carry on conversations that aren't school related, an amazing intellectual exercise that will force you to draw upon resources that you may have forgotten you had. Second, if you must talk about teaching, you'll have to employ your descriptive skills to help your friends visualize the "players" and to re-create the situations in an entertaining way.

And if you can't find friends who aren't teachers, at least find some people who don't teach English.

Resist Fads in Teaching

Teaching fads are fun. That makes them like pedagogical parties: socially motivated, pleasant, but ephemeral. But teaching fads are also contagious. And that makes them like some diseases: easily communicable, resistant to treatment, and ultimately annoying.

The best thing to do is build up your academic resistance by relying on the vitamin C of teaching: good sense. Protected by good sense, you can spare yourself and your students from doing needlepoint projects to accompany *The Scarlet Letter*, from building a miniature of the Globe Theater out of sugar cubes, from pack-ratting under the guise of portfolio building, and from reenacting scenes from novels instead of discussing them.

Stay Professionally Alive

It's sometimes difficult to stay "centered" when so many people and issues pull at you. During second hour, Marlene tells you she needs her recommendation by fifth hour; Bryan forgot his psoriasis medication and gets itchy during fourth hour; you've got a parent-teacher conference during your planning period; after school, you have to help organize the National Honor Society car wash—if the members remember to show up, because the baseball team just made it to sectionals. This kind of day seems to focus on everyone but you: college-bound Marlene, scratchy Bryan, put-upon parents, overcommitted NHS members, even egotistical baseball players.

Professional activities—attending conferences, presenting sessions at conferences, attending seminars, writing for publication, taking classes—have dual value for solving the everybody-but-me dilemma. First, these activities enhance teaching while providing intellectual stimulation. Second, they focus wholly on you. So go to a state or national meeting (avoiding those with the words "deconstruction" or "semiotics" in their titles), compose a teaching article for a state or national journal (avoiding articles with titles like "Woodchuck Imagery in the Writings of Henry David Thoreau"), or take a class you "want" to take (avoiding classes that promise discussions of "pedagogical content knowledge matrices assessments").

Personalize Your Work Space

The basic classroom can be a dismal place to spend the workday. Most classrooms, with window walls (or worse yet, windowless walls), institutional colors, wide expanses of chalkboards, and commercial shelving, are fairly sterile environments for any activity, and especially sterile for learning. Not only do most classrooms provide little visual stimulus for student daydreamers, but when students are reading or writing, teachers don't have much to look at either.

So jazz up your classroom. Post some posters (new ones, not the old Jefferson Airplane or Bon Jovi posters from your dorm room); lug in some plants (polyester ones if your real ones are prone to botanical suicide); tote in some statuary, ceramics, or found objects (so long as they aren't discarded power tools). You'll be surprised by how much easier it is for you and your students to make it through the day in a space that doesn't look like a Motel 6 conference room.

Keep Your Sense of Humor

Teaching can be described by lots of adjectives: *demanding, intriguing, time-consuming, challenging, nerve-racking, rewarding, excruciating, invigorating, annoying, satisfying, draining,* and others. But one descriptor we often forget to use is *amusing*.

One of the well-kept secrets of teaching is that so much of what goes on in schools is, quite simply, funny—even when it's supposed to be serious. If we can maintain our sense of humor, then the girl who wants to leave during the SAT because she just stuck chewing gum in her hair, the plaid-polyester-suited principal discussing the need for a dress code, and the librarian who won't let the students touch the books can all be put in perspective. This is not to say that these matters don't deserve our serious attention, but a good laugh—or at least a sly chuckle or a knowing smile—can help us get through the day and keep our sanity too.

Reflect on Your Teaching

On a fairly regular basis, you should take time to think about the ups and downs of your teaching. Whether you do it weekly, monthly, or yearly is a matter of personal choice, but reflect you should. Sort out why certain parts of your classes work well and figure out why others don't. Maybe even ask your students to do course evaluations to guide your reflection. Then set goals for yourself and adjust your teaching to meet them.

To have some fun with your reflection—this should not be an exercise in wearing a pedagogical hair shirt—you might try various ways to reflect in writing. Journals are always useful, but you might try writing haiku about your study hall ("Lethargic students, / Resting from their part-time jobs. / So why are we here?"), composing limericks about that guy in your first-period class ("There once was a boy we call Nathan, / Whose behavior was always frustratin'. . ."), or conducting mock interviews with yourself ("So, Mr. X, what was the most rewarding aspect of hall duty?"). Most of all, remember that focused thinking about what we do can enhance our chances for future success.

Having chosen a life of teaching, and having spent over half of my life in the profession (egad!), I can honestly say that I wouldn't want to do anything else. That doesn't mean, however, that I love everything about teaching. Who could? Too much of what goes on at the edges of learning is disruptive, counterproductive, and just plain weird. But if you keep my helpful suggestions in mind, perhaps your best of times will balance out your worst of times, and you will be able to arm yourself against the slings and arrows of outrageous situations. I mean this figuratively, of course.

FIREFIGHTER, COOK, PACK RAT, TEACHER: ADVICE FOR CHAIRS

by Mary M. Licklider
Rock Bridge High School, Columbia, Missouri

When I inherited the position of language arts chair, I also inherited a strong, dedicated department. That was good, too, because

I didn't have the first idea of what serving as their chair should entail. Seven years later, as I prepared to leave the classroom for family reasons, I hoped I was leaving the department at least as strong as I'd found it. In any case, I found myself reflecting on things I wish I'd been told seven years before. Maybe these snippets of advice will prove useful to others assuming leadership roles.

Meet Regularly and Require Attendance

Although regularly scheduled meetings won't do it alone, it is well-nigh impossible to forge an identity as a group and a relationship of professional respect with individuals we never see. And decisions that speak for the group should be made by the group. To allow members, who may be absent because they are feeling somewhat disengaged or disenfranchised anyway, to quietly miss meetings is akin to avoiding calling on the student who works so hard to "disappear" in the classroom: it only aggravates the problem. Invite the district coordinator and the principal to the meetings. This helps accomplish two goals: it encourages prompt attendance, and it facilitates communication.

Make Meetings as Painless as Possible

Provide food at meetings; it sets a congenial tone after a long day. Encourage a prompt call to order. (Latecomers in our department are responsible for bringing treats the following month.) Distribute an agenda, stick to it, and move through it efficiently. Unproductive discussion is an insult to a busy teacher's schedule. Invite ramblers to discuss issues individually after the meeting if necessary.

Observe Each Teacher Every Year

Some districts require yearly observations as part of the evaluation process; others don't. I have yet to sit through an hour in someone else's classroom without learning something. No other single activity as department chair taught me so much respect for the teachers I worked for. No other activity opened as many channels for discussion of concerns—real concerns about how we serve kids. And no other activity gave me as many opportunities to share the wealth of our department: lesson ideas the whole department needed to hear about that a teacher might be too modest, too forgetful, or too busy to share.

Develop Conferencing Skills

If your district doesn't provide training in conferencing skills, make it a personal priority. Observations open the channels and create opportunities for communication. Good conferencing skills bring that potential to fruition. Good conferences allow teachers to step back, take a breath, look at where they've been and where they want to go, and maybe even think about how they want to get there. Sure, we do that on our own from time to time. We revise writing on our own, too. But we all know that there is much to be gained from getting another reader's response to our writing—not to write for us, but to serve as audience. So it is with conferencing. We need to learn how to listen productively, not how to talk for the teacher.

Be Discrete with Confidential Information

Shakespeare noted that "two can keep a secret, putting one away." If teachers and administrators are to trust us to help with real concerns, there will be times when we will have to be discrete with confidential information and keep secrets without dying. One of the roles of the department chair is to put out "brush fires," containing and dousing minor flares before they develop into destructive blazes. This is best done quietly, through the timing of an observation or a "coincidental" visit to a classroom after school or a conversational question over lunch. I'm not talking about being sneaky or about whitewashing problems. I am saying that problems can and should be addressed directly and promptly, and that no one needs to be humiliated in the process. We need to cultivate a balance between mercy and justice.

Keep One Ear to the Ground

A disciplinary rule from the classroom is applicable in the chair's office as well: hear everything, and know what to ignore. Most often—to continue my firefighter metaphor—matches burn, go out, cool, and are tossed away, forgotten. These individual "matches" are probably best ignored. Occasionally, though, a pattern begins to emerge. Being alert to such patterns can allow a department chair to fan the flames of inspiration with whatever help or encouragement might be at his or her disposal or, on the other hand, to cool a smoldering ember before it ignites.

Remain an Advocate

Make sure administrators, students, other teachers, and sometimes even legislators and the media know about the good things teachers in your department are doing. Be an advocate. And similarly, as department chair, be willing to "take the heat" occasionally. If a problem arises, it is often the department chair's role to address it. If departmental decisions are reached by consensus, support and explain them to parents or whomever.

Become a Scrounger (a.k.a. Pack Rat)

I remain convinced that conditions drive more talented teachers out of the profession than money does. Spend some time finding out about which funds are available and for what purposes. In our district, for example, there are district-level departmental budgets (English, reading, journalism, drama), extracurricular accounts (book fines, Writing Club, PTA money), federal Chapter II grants, state Incentives for School Excellence grants, and federal Free Text funds—all with their own limits. Browse through office and school supply catalogs. Little things can mean a lot to morale, and knowing where to find those little things is a learned skill. If a laminated wall calendar will help a teacher keep track of make-up work during flu season, find one. If pre-cut bulletin board letters will save time, find them. (I must confess that the skill of scrounging came easily to me, as I have always been something of a pack rat.)

Set High Standards

A department chair is a leadership role, like it or not. Just as the tone and expectations for a classroom are set through hundreds of day-to-day decisions, the tone and expectations for an entire department are set through issues raised at departmental meetings, through the sincerity with which we approach conferences, through our professionalism with our own students, through the professional memberships we maintain, through the professional conferences we attend. Set high standards. Others notice.

Ask for Help Occasionally

The department chair may be a leadership role, but no one appointed any of us "Super Teacher." Besides its obvious advantage to us as chairs, asking for advice or help is a flattering show of respect for a colleague. If there are departmental files from the last department chair, read them. I was surprised at how much I learned about a department of which I'd been a long-time member. That broader perspective is useful, and it can often prevent the reinvention of the wheel.

Like anything else in education, there are no "recipes" for success. Each cook must adjust the seasonings to suit the situation and the guests. I do hope, however, that these suggestions might serve as basic ingredients, as, if you'll forgive me, food for thought.

DEPENDENCE AND GRADE INFLATION: A VICIOUS CYCLE

by Candace O'Donnell
Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania

Recently the provost of the college where I teach writing and methods of teaching English sent out a memo chiding the faculty for being "old softies" on grades. I laughed, wondering how many professors caught the musical allusion. Was this yet another sign of my advancing middle age?

Still, I had to sign a rueful mea culpa. Most first-year students in my introductory writing course earn a B; A's are relatively rare, but so are C's, D's, and F's. In my own grading, in that of my colleagues, in the experience of the student teachers I supervise, and even with the superb cooperating teachers with whom we work, I can clearly see the pervasive spread of grade inflation.

As I ponder the ways in which I have applied and, to some degree, misapplied the valuable concepts of process writing and peer editing, I am forced to admit that my own contribution to grade inflation is the inevitable consequence of the overdependence that I have unwittingly fostered in my students. Let me attempt to dissect this entangled cycle of dependency and grade inflation.

Perhaps the first warning, unheeded at the time, came a few years ago when I attended a symposium of over two hundred local writing teachers, kindergarten through college. At this symposium, the keynote speaker proudly announced that if she asked her high school students to turn in a paper without peer editing, she would have a "near riot" on her hands.

In my early days of experimenting with peer groups, I too found that when I asked my first-year college students to prepare and complete their final paper for the semester without consulting with either their writing group or me, their reactions ran the gamut from mild insecurity to outright rebellion. And a significant number had much weaker papers when expected to write independently, indicating that perhaps the students had not, in fact, mastered the skills supposedly mastered during collaboration.

Indeed, even when we did use peer groups, after weeks of feedback at every drafting stage, some students became petulant and demanding. A few whined if their group did not catch every mistake on content, style, even mechanics. For example, one girl was crushed when I pointed out convoluted "pretzel" sentences in her final draft. She countered, "Why didn't you mention this to me earlier? Why didn't my writing group catch it? If someone had just told me, I could have corrected it, and then I would have gotten an A!"

With steady support from teacher and peers at every stage of the process—brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing—no student has a valid excuse for turning in a D or F paper, and A's and B's abound. The reason for such inflation was perhaps best illustrated by a colleague of mine who had interviewed for a position at another school. As part of her screening, she was asked to write comments on and assign a grade to a sample student essay. As she told me later, "I had no idea how to grade it because I couldn't believe it was supposed to be a final submission. I would never let a paper get to me in such a state!"

I could only agree with my friend. Both she and I were so sold on process that we would have worked with students on preliminary drafts to weed out egregious errors so that few papers would be submitted to us for a grade in "such a state." Only those few notoriously irresponsible students who missed class, writing groups, and individual conferences would slip through the cracks, and for those few, I, for one, had precious little sympathy in assigning marks.

Granted, possibly there is no intrinsic harm in giving a disproportionate number of higher grades. I certainly don't hew to grading on the curve. In fact, I believe that a pass/fail system is ideal for writing instruction. But that is a separate discussion. My concern here is the effect on students who would probably earn a lower mark in a system that required more independence.

Bear with me as I sketch a profile of an imaginary student. Let's call him Joe. He's a first-year college student, but secondary teachers will probably recognize similar dangers for the students they are preparing for college or jobs. Joe is polite, friendly, and hardworking to the point of compulsion. He never misses class, takes notes assiduously, participates actively in class discussion, more than carries his weight in writing groups, comes well prepared to all individual conferences with me, and, additionally, stops by my office for extra help. If he needs still more assistance, he goes to the well-staffed writing center at our college. Joe has been known to put his papers through eight to ten drafts.

Because a major component of his grade is degree of improvement, determined by comparing multiple drafts, and because, abetted by his writing group and me, his Herculean efforts have managed to correct his more glaring problems, Joe squeaks by my course with a C+, perhaps even a B-. I know, however—and I have tried to warn Joe of this—that he still has major weaknesses in his writing: perhaps his syntax is garbled, or his vocabulary is sparse, or his usage patterns are not standard, or he is incapable of developing an original thesis, or all of the above. I gently caution Joe to continue using the writing center for papers in future courses. I offer my ongoing help with his writing, and Joe usually takes me up on this.

Joe has proved himself a genius at some valuable life skills: he is tenacious, and he knows how to seek and implement help from the appropriate sources. It could be argued that these skills are much more important than writing fluency, but I have my nagging doubts. How well has the process served Joe? How well have I served him? How will his papers be judged by other professors? Even more worrisome, how soon will he be up against a blockade in his career when he cannot mask his writing weaknesses? For instance, will he ever have to produce an annual report under deadline without input from co-workers and polishing from an executive secretary? Melodramatic? Maybe, but still, I wonder.

I have reluctantly concluded that the best way to control grade inflation is to nip budding overdependency. Without regressing to the bad old days and subjecting every essay to a bloodbath of red ink, I am gradually evolving techniques to wean my developing writers.

I caution my students in writing at the beginning of each semester and repeatedly remind them that neither their classmates are nor I am responsible for correcting every problem or catching every mistake. I continually fine-tune the distinction between peer response groups and peer editing groups. My students now seem to grasp the concept that response groups give lively and useful feedback throughout the process, feedback that the writer is free to accept or reject. Peer editing groups or proofreading partners are rarely used, only, if ever, at the culmination of several drafts. Even then I stress that peer editors are not expected to be eagle-eyed, infallible error spotters; that falls under the ultimate responsibility of each writer who is, in the final analysis, solely responsible for his or her grade.

All writing groups are guided by worksheets, and naturally I circulate to keep them on task. As an added incentive, I monitor both oral and written feedback from writing groups, and I average this in as part of the heavily weighted class performance grade. But I'm convinced that assigning group grades for writing projects only encourages overdependency.

To put teeth into these warnings, I do not read every draft, nor do I read entire portfolios, and on those drafts to which I do respond, I try to resist the temptation to overexplain marginal comments, especially on mechanics. I simply circle usage or mechanical errors the first time they surface. The student finds an explanation of the error in their handbook, seeking an explanation from me only if stumped.

No later than midway through the semester, I move toward self-editing, which I constantly stress as the ultimate goal of the course. For example, early in the term, we do "focused feedback," in which the writing groups subject each working draft to four separate readings on content, organization, style, and mechanics (a variation on Irene Payan's "Peer Proofreading" in *How to Handle the Paper Load,* edited by Gene Stanford, NCTE, 1980, pp. 124–125). Later we do this exercise with partners instead of groups. Finally, I require students to put their own papers through four focused readings of their own, and I strongly urge them to continue this practice in all future writing. I wonder how many take this advice.

Incidentally, the pattern used is not important. In *Write to Learn,* Donald Murray proposes three readings: one for meaning, one for order, and one for voice (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1990, p. 210). The point is that each student should ultimately be trained to be his or her own editor.

I no longer routinely build individual writing conferences into the syllabus for every paper. Instead, I schedule only one conference reserved for the semester's most difficult project, the research paper. Students are welcome to as many additional consultations as they wish, provided they come with specific problem areas to be addressed, not a vague "Could you just read this over and tell me what you think of it?" Using a medical analogy, I ask my patients to save us both time by jotting down a list of symptoms they want the doctor to diagnose.

Certainly the final paper of the term (and this might be several papers for secondary students) should be executed throughout all stages with no assistance, and the writer should not expect any. Indeed, at this point it should be a source of pride to move through the process independently and produce creditable results.

Since I'm still in the early stages of breaking the overdependency/grade inflation cycle, I can't report any hard data of overwhelming success. My mean grade is slightly lower, but I still give too many B's. Yet I can say with some assurance that the higher grades have been earned by more independent student effort. Both my paper load and my conference load are lighter because my writers have learned to submit an extra working draft and to come for a conference only when they have accurately diagnosed what they want treated. I have managed to wean my "Joes" more firmly, but I still worry about them.

Overall, I have set higher standards for my students and made more reasonable demands on myself. For years I spoon-fed process writing to my students and baby-sat them through my courses. As a mother of four, how could I have forgotten that the more you do for learners of any age, the more they expect of you? Now I expect maturity and independence from my students, and they take this challenge as a compliment.

WHEN MODELS COLLIDE

by Diana Dreyer
Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania

Like Candace O'Donnell, I too teach writing and the teaching of writing in Pennsylvania. I too have a provost who sends memos, though not necessarily of a chiding nature and never that I recall in his eight years of tenure here one advising faculty of their inability to assess students.

What I do see in my provost's latest memo is encouragement: he mentions his pride in the quality of the faculty and students currently inhabiting the local scene. It seems to me that this quality, along with the increased selectivity of faculty and students, a situation more common than rare in this post-open-admissions era, accounts for the situation that some like to bemoan: grade inflation, a term laden with all kinds of negative economic and other connotations. Yet higher-quality students taught by more effective faculty should lead to more effective learning and better classroom performance and, in turn, higher grades.

Such selectivity might provide an explanation for the increased numbers of higher grades, a rationale for so-called grade inflation in institutions of higher learning. Still, public high schools do not enjoy the luxury of selective student admissions, and yet secondary education evaluation seems another victim of these inflationary times. Indeed, the Associated Press in May of 1993 released the news that "the grade point average reported by high school students taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) between 1988 and 1992 increased from 3.07 to 3.12, even as math scores remained level and verbal scores fell five points." Do reports such as these substantiate the existence of grade inflation?

I would be leery of concluding that such numbers signal such a problem, given the dangers inherent in self-reporting, not to mention concerns about exactly what it is that the SAT assesses (certainly not writing ability). I offer my suspicions not to justify what may be unearned higher grades, but rather to contextualize further the issue that O'Donnell raises: dependence in writing classrooms and its effect on grading.

I agree that a vicious cycle does revolve around dependence and grades, an interaction promoted by a numbers-driven culture overly reliant on measures that do not begin to address performance in context—in the case of the writing classroom, in the context of the incredibly complex and social act of composing. Students are all too aware of this grading phenomenon, an awareness that leads to dependence to be sure, not on one another, but on the grade itself, a letter or number that communicates to the world what kind of people they are and what they are likely to become, a symbol ripe with ramifications for the present and the future, an extrinsic reward or punishment so overwhelming that we tend to overlook the intrinsic value of writing: to learn, to discover, to make meaning. That's the kind of dependence I worry about: dependence on the almighty grade as opposed to dependence on a community of writers that conceivably empowers those inhabiting it.

A Collision of Models

Of even greater concern is what I see as a collision of models: the notion that we can employ an enlightened pedagogy informed by sound research and theory—in the case in question, teaching the entire writing process, resulting in products predicated on student choice, collaboration, revision, editing, etc.—and then hold up the traditional, product-based pedagogy as a template for assessment.

In other words, evaluation must be congruent with theory and practice. We need to recognize exactly what we are about when we assess a particular project or the achievement of a grading period in order to conjoin instruction and assessment in a way that results in productive learning for both instructor and instructed. Without congruent evaluation, we wind up with grades as mysterious in nature to students as the process of how writers write is to those inexperienced writers who've never had the benefit of exposure to the variety of workable strategies that writers employ. Worse still, we're once again setting up our students for failure, sending out a very mixed message: learn to use these strategies and see how you grow as a writer; then I as your teacher will pull the rug out from under you, doing the time-honored error-count thing—never mind the meaning you managed to convey.

We need to determine exactly what our goals are for teaching writing, what classroom activities best lead to these goals' realization, and then link means of assessment that also help us to achieve these goals, rather than use grading as one more gatekeeper technique. The traditional focus that views writing as examination or as a display of mastery of a subset of skills contradicts what proponents of a holistic approach to language and literacy acquisition tell us: among other things, that overemphasis on mistakes results in error avoidance, a strategy perhaps resulting in error-free products, but also all too commonly in ones that are voice- and meaning-free as well. Such error-avoidance tactics preclude the hypothesizing and risk-taking so characteristic of stronger language learners and are unlikely to produce lifelong writers who find the intrinsic value in writing despite the challenges it entails.

Spandel and Stiggins caution against other elements inherent in the traditional view of assessment: that it supplies summative but no formative feedback, coming at the conclusion of the process as it usually does, and that it is primarily teacher-directed. Both factors weaken what we're supposedly about: helping student writers reach their greatest potential. Spandel and Stiggins suggest making evaluation indivisible from the writing process itself. They advocate teaching students to assess their own writing, to take responsibility for what they have accomplished and what remains to be done in the future. Finally, Spandel and Stiggins promote a classroom in which assessment serves "the full range of purposes . . . from diagnosing students' needs, to grouping students for instruction, to evaluating this instruction, and, finally, to evaluating students' performance." Such "interim feedback," they assert, "occurs prior to or apart from grading (or both), so that students learn to write for the joy and the satisfaction of writing" (*Creating Writers: Linking Assessment and Writing Instruction*, New York: Longman, 1990, p. 79).

I might also add that it's our responsibility to show how experienced writers rely on both formative and summative feedback so that our students can wean themselves from grade dependence, a metamorphosis enabling their collaboration and use of the range of responses inherent in a writers' community.

A Community of Writers

Modeling my own writing process, one involving lots of formative feedback as well as summative judgments, is one of the best ways I've found to invite my first-year college students into the community of writers I expect them to contribute to as well as profit from. The first two weeks of this semester, for example, my class engaged primarily in several paired and small-group activities, interaction designed more to promote community than to generate any particular piece of writing. Just last week, the third in the semester, we each began drafting a piece. The *we* is literal; while the undergraduates began their projects, I began this article. At our next meeting, I'll bring my existing draft to class, where a staff-tutor from the writing center will confer with me about it, killing two birds with one stone: providing me with interim feedback and showing my students what to expect from a writing center encounter.

What will I do next with my paper? I'll show my students the video *Beginning Writing Groups* (Tacoma, WA: Wordshop Productions, Inc.), a video that features writers about their age working in peer response groups, modeling a process suggested by Peter Elbow twenty years ago in *Writing Without Teachers* (New York: Oxford, 1973), one that my students and I will replicate with this text as the paper in question, again providing me with still more interim feedback and modeling the response process I encourage for my students. Then I'll return to the word processor to determine which responses I'll address in the next draft, which I'll ignore, and whatever else comes to mind after a few days' respite from the task at hand. After that, I'll hand the next version to a colleague who is good at seeing where I need to rearrange, delete, or expand my ideas—the kind of response that has informed the assessment of both my own and my students' papers. And once more to the drawing board after that exchange of ideas.

Finally, I'll submit my latest draft to Jim Strickland for what may turn out to be a thumbs-down summative judgment (or grade deflation). On the other hand, he just may offer still further suggestions for change, formative feedback providing me with still more opportunity for meaning making. Or maybe, just maybe, he'll give it a thumbs-up, calling it a keeper as is. In any case, I'll share the outcome with my students, enlarging their view of how writing works outside the classroom and how I expect it to work for them inside the classroom.

Does an editor's acceptance or rejection—the student equivalent of an A or a D—even begin to mirror the layers of activity that the construction of a text entails? Does rejection of my piece mean I've failed? Certainly in no way does being turned down for publication signal what I've gained—as a writer and as a teacher of writing—in terms of the additional composing experience, the discovery of what I think about grading and dependence, and the knowledge of how to articulate those ideas to a reader. Whatever the outcome, it's my job to share both the positive and the negative with my students. What they'll also witness is writing as a social act. Come to think of it, what I should also do is make a home video of the actual writing: my initial reluctance to the commitment of even turning on the computer, my approaches and retreats to where it is located in my dining room, balancing my checkbook, writing and addressing birthday cards, and other little avoidance tactics I concoct as a writer, and finally—once I get cooking—the magnetic force of the project itself. I will tell them about these, but I know that showing would be more effective. Maybe with next semester's crop.

So the question remains: Does my reliance on feedback from others really make me a dependent writer and, consequently, am I passing on strategies to my students that deter rather than empower them? I don't think so. If my students are at all like me or Joe (O'Donnell's hypothetical polite, friendly, and hardworking student, who faithfully attends class, actively participates in large- and small-group discussion, prepares well for writing interaction, and knows when and where to go for still additional help), I'm not at all worried about their hitting the wall in situations in which they cannot mask their writing weaknesses. They'll know the value of collaboration and how to locate the kinds of feedback they need the most. Finally, they'll know what fun it is to be a writer—even if it's hard.

WRITING THE MALL

by John S. Simmons
Florida State University

Writing assignments, given without much context and seldom shared upon completion, have irritated and discouraged young people for much of this century. Nevertheless, strategies for helping young writers discover just what they might comfortably and enthusiastically choose as the subject for their compositions have sprouted up in courses, professional gatherings, institutes, workshops, indeed wherever two or three gather to talk about the improvement of instruction in written composition. In some of the more recently touted prewriting discovery approaches, the classroom has taken on the form of a kind of laboratory in which ideas for written products can be identified, brainstormed, shared, discussed, analyzed, and expanded upon. While a wealth of creative ideas for prewriting sessions have been advanced by such current authorities as Donald Murray, Ken Macrorie, James Moffett, Dan Kirby, and Tom Liner, to name a few, the one I propose is in no way original. Rather, it represents revisiting a traditional strategy—observation and reflection—in 1990's attire—a visit to the mall. Rightly considered, the shopping mall may well represent a contemporary microcosm of American culture. Why not use it?

Observation

Most will agree that a valuable written product can best be created when writers augment their prewriting observations with note taking, summarizing, analyzing, discussing, and comparing their observations of the phenomena that caught their attention. Reflection—the intensive analyzing, internalizing, and relating of those events, situations, or settings observed to past experiences—must be stressed as important if the observation is to become a truly legitimate touchstone for the development of a composed statement that is both coherent and meaningful.

The start of my specific adaptation of observation and reflection as a prewriting strategy can be seen in Woody Allen's 1991 film *Scenes from a Mall*. Despite the valiant efforts of Bette Midler and Allen himself, this movie was never in any real contention for an Academy Award. But it is the progression of events and the setting of the mall itself that provided me with the basis for my adaptation. Some teachers may even wish to rent the video of the film to show scenes as part of their orientation to the observation activity that follows.

I propose that teachers begin in whole-class discussion with a review of the various events that routinely take place in the shopping malls our students visit with such frequency and youthful enthusiasm these days. At the mall, everyday human interactions occur right before our students' eyes, and with our help in leading students to careful observation and thoughtful reflection upon these scenes, a personalized, even imaginative written product can be created.

The variety of possibilities in mall observations may be this activity's greatest selling point. If a student isn't excited by a particular incident, then he or she can move on. As the Woody Allen film so vividly illustrates, there's lots of action to check out in a mall, and that action is both ongoing and consummately diverse. Anyone who can't discover something interesting happening in the U.S. shopping malls of today is not really trying. Furthermore, there are lots of people the student can "interview": sales personnel, custodians, security officers, performers, even just plain fellow observers. An hour or two at a mall can offer the dedicated voyeur all the drama he or she will ever need for a whole semester of writing assignments.

Though this activity might be used by middle school and junior high school teachers, it has more potential usefulness at the senior high school level, where more students have drivers' licenses. During the trip to the local shopping mall, the student drivers and their passengers should be on the alert to observe any of the nearly infinite number of noteworthy incidents that may be in progress as a result of interactions outside the car windows. Both noting as many details as possible and imaginative reflections are highly desirable during such viewing. Questions that begin "Suppose that . . ." or "What if . . ." will flood the observers' minds. When several students observe the same phenomenon, their perceptions and interpretations can be shared. These observations might also be conducted during the trip back from the mall, as the student drivers and passengers leave for other destinations.

Here are some examples of what your students might observe during their journeys to and from the local mall of their choice:

- An officer of the law has pulled a driver (possibly a teenager) over to the roadside for some apparent infraction. The police car's blue lights are flashing. The officer and the apprehended driver are observed in serious, head-to-head dialogue.
- A young person is observed helping an elderly person across the street at a busy intersection. The latter obviously has problems of mobility and is in animated conversation with the youthful helper.
- A large, seemingly ferocious dog attacks a postman or delivery person (possibly a pizza delivery employee) at the front door of a residence. An occupant of that residence had just opened the front door when the attack was observed.
- A child bolts from a young mother and runs out into the street. Traffic is two-way and is proceeding at normal speed. There are no crosswalks or stop signs in the vicinity. The mother is observed screaming a warning and chasing the child.
- An accident has just taken place at a normally busy intersection. The damage to both autos appears to be considerable. The sound of a police siren is heard. The two drivers have emerged from their vehicles and are observed to be engaged in a heated argument.

Scenes at the Mall

Still, we must not forget that it is the mall observations that give this activity its true identity and ultimate value. Among the several advantages the mall has over trips to and from it, none is greater than the opportunity the mall provides for *deliberate* observations. At the mall, an event, situation, or even overt conflict can be observed virtually throughout its duration. Student observers can even "shadow" a situation. Some occasions will offer students the chance to eavesdrop on dialogue. In rare cases, they might even be able to talk with those mall denizens involved in the action itself.

Malls provide another advantage as well: the ability to reflect, in a real sense. Observers can sit down on a bench or at a table in the food court, whip out their notebooks, and write virtually to their hearts' content. For those students who wish to do their mall observations with partners, these resting places offer sites for comparing notes and analyzing events soon after they have taken place. Two heads are, after all, better than one. And the angle from which an observation is made often affects the deductions which emanate from it.

The possibilities for mall incidents worthy of observation are countless. Here are a few examples:

- A radical or "inspired person" might be found holding forth. The topics that such a speaker might cover are many: religion, politics, global catastrophe, community ills, and so on. Such speakers usually attract audiences (the mall might be considered the U.S. counterpart of Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park), so observers will usually have the opportunity to interview both spectators as well as, quite often, the performer. And if a dispute or scuffle breaks out during the impassioned monologue, the situation gets even more interesting.

- Because many among us like to call attention to ourselves, the malls are often populated by people in outrageous attire. People can be observed parading through the mall decked out in some of the wildest costumes imaginable. Not a few of these "demonstrators" are quite willing to discourse on their garb if given half a chance. Interviewing them as well as a few interested onlookers can provide this type of observation with some useful context.
- A group of young people, usually moving in phalanx, might be observed pushing and shoving their way through a crowd, especially on heavily burdened escalators. Their talk during such movement is usually loud, often profane, generally offensive. The *real* statement they might be trying to make is open for conjecture. People in their vicinity make for likely, often willing, interviewees.
- A customer might be observed demanding a refund for an item which he or she claims to have bought in a given store, but for which he or she has no sales slip. The argument that will most likely ensue may involve a floor manager on one side and the shopper's companions on the other. A student observer usually has an excellent vantage point from which to view such confrontations and their aftermath.
- At a table in the food court, a child spills all or most of his or her food on the floor. The mother, who was not paying enough attention to her little one, might be observed as she goes into paroxysms of anger.
- At another table, an erstwhile loving couple may become embroiled in a lovers' quarrel. The tone may be muted, or Romeo and Juliet may just let it all hang out. If student observers are lucky enough to be seated close to the action, they might have a great angle of vision on what transpires. In any event, the overwhelming majority of student observers will empathize with the lovers.
- When all else fails, one cannot miss by sitting in on youthful romance at the mall. The whole interplay of involved boys and girls is hard to miss in these areas and sometimes results in some fairly dramatic enactments. Students might observe how the would-be lovers are dressed and act. Some might consider this one "inappropriate for class discussion," but it's there, my friends, it's there.
- It's sad to say, but students may even observe a shoplifter in the practice of his or her art. What students do in such an instance is up to them as ordinary citizens. What they have as students is another dynamite observation opportunity. If the shoplifter is apprehended, the value of the observation is obviously enhanced, as is the potential for the student to act as witness to the wrongdoing.

Conclusion

One of Sherlock Holmes's more memorable admonitions to his friend and constant companion was "You see, Watson, but you do not *observe*" (italics his). This rather critical comment might be made to people of all ages worldwide from here to eternity. In promoting *careful* observation and *thoughtful* reflection (italics mine this time), teachers can renew the use of a technique in which students check out what is going on around them as the stimulus for writing. Events that symbolize virtually innumerable examples of the human quest for the good, the true, and the beautiful are happening all around us every day. It's just a question of keeping Sherlock Holmes's admonition in mind. Perhaps a new backdrop—the contemporary American shopping mall—can be added to this old and, I would contend, most pertinent idea.

WHEN DOES A VULGARITY BECOME AN OBSCENITY?

by Carol Jago
Santa Monica High School, California

When I was fifteen, my mother found Mary McCarthy's *The Group* under my pillow. It was the only book she ever took away from me, and, predictably, her action guaranteed that I would find another copy. We never talked about the missing paperback, but I've often thought about the incident. Had she read the book? What was she afraid that I would learn or see? Did she fear the frank language would undo ten years of Catholic school tuition? The fact that I kept the book hidden suggests that I knew it was contraband, but so much in the text was beyond my ken that it could hardly have done me harm. Certainly none of the words were new.

Like every other teenager, I suppose I felt a need to test the boundaries circumscribing my life. The daily battle-cry of every teenager seems to be "How far can I go?" Some, by their nature, must step as close as possible to the edge. Fortunately, as their teacher, I don't have to deal with the really difficult questions of curfew or the state of their bedrooms. I do, however, bear some responsibility for the boundaries of their language.

More than anything else, I do not want my students to use language casually. I want them to value the currency of words and to husband the power of certain phrases. So what am I to do when certain words appear in student papers, words that by most standards would be categorized as obscene?

(Lengthy aside: Style guides for newspapers define obscenity as "words or acts offensive to one's feelings or to prevailing notions of modesty." Another definition is simply "something disgusting or repulsive." Profanity refers to the showing of "disrespect or contempt for sacred things." Vulgarity is the state of being "vulgar, crude, coarse, boorish, indecent, or obscene." Roughly, it works out this way: phrases with a sexual connotation are considered obscene; those with a religious connotation are considered profane; and those with an excremental connotation are considered vulgar. Obviously the definitions overlap.)

If a student uses a word simply for shock value, then I advise that student writer to find a more original expression to express strong emotion, something less hackneyed by rappers. I hope I am beyond being shocked by a fifteen-year-old. On the other hand, if the word in question is used as dialogue in a story and in keeping with the character the student is attempting to portray, I do not censor, particularly if the intended audience is mature. Substituting symbols or hyphens for key letters in the word only lends a prudishness to the piece and unduly distracts the reader. I neither want to pretend that four-letter words are unknown to me nor that they offend me when used in this fashion. It is more important to me that student writers use good judgment. They must have a compelling reason for using strong language.

At Santa Monica High School, editors of the school newspaper, teenagers bent on testing the limits of their language, regularly hold meetings about the use of language in the paper. Our "censorship committee" looks over what has been printed and listens to arguments for and against particular word usage. Whatever the outcome as far as the paper is concerned, the discussions held among students, teachers, school board members, and administrators are among the most thoughtful I experience in a month of meetings. The student editors, Amanda and Zack, are extraordinarily articulate in their defense of the word. They often persuade me that in fact there was a compelling reason for the use of a particular phrase.

As Amanda and Zack respectfully challenge my beliefs, I am reminded why I love teaching as I do. Students push me to defend the borders of appropriate language use. They make me reexamine my own boundaries. They keep me honest. Teachers cannot simply be keepers of the status quo. But we must be beacons of common sense in the use of language. This is the only way we will ever persuade teenagers to step back from the edge.

THE FIRST SIX MINUTES

by Terrie St. Michel
South Mountain High School, Phoenix, Arizona

When I think about holistic instruction, rapport and classroom climate immediately come to mind. In my experience, effective instruction depends on the quality of my instructional delivery and my organization of student activities. At no time is this more evident than during the first few minutes of each class period, which, if handled skillfully, can enhance the day's activities and my overall interactions with students.

Before the beginning of each class, I turn off the lights, put a journal topic on the overhead, start a cassette tape of New Age music, and then stand in the doorway. While monitoring the hallway, encouraging all students to move along, I am able to individually greet my students as they enter the classroom. I believe that my physical presence conveys the message that I am paying attention to them and that coming to class on time is important.

Once the tardy bell has rung, I set a kitchen timer for six minutes. Many students start writing as soon as they enter the classroom; all students have been taught that they are to begin writing quietly once the timer has been set. I do not answer questions, give directions, or write passes during this time. Journal topics range from asking students to "describe what color you feel like today" to "summarize yesterday's discussion about *Macbeth*" to "write down everything you know about mythology" to "define the key components of the writing process." Students are always free to choose their own topics, though. What's important to me is that they're writing.

My students appreciate this as well. Year after year, my students report that they look forward to the daily writing. One student, Rodrigio, commented that daily journal writing helped him "to be in class on time, . . . prepared to work, mentally, . . . bringing the materials required." Rey said, "It's a great way to warm up before starting our class assignments." Elizabeth said, "Starting off your class with a [daily journal writing] everyday helps me get my brain and hands ready to work." LaVonne even said that journal writing had given her "something to look forward to every morning."

My primary purpose in having students write each day is to get them thinking. Yet I have found that there are other benefits as well. Daily journal writing gives students an opportunity to express their feelings, to relax, and to focus on the subject (English). Heather said, "It helps me learn to restate questions. It lets me give my point of view." Rhamsye said, "Sometimes when I don't want to talk about something, it helps just to write it down." Daily journal writing made Sonya "think and notice the things that have happened in the past." And Amy said, "It has helped me to get out emotions and write things I couldn't say. It's helped me to be able to think things out clearly and sort out my thoughts."

I too benefit from having my students write. Those extra few minutes give me the chance to calibrate to the class and to quickly review the students' collective persona. Most of the time, and particularly during the initial stages of establishing my classroom routine, I sit at a student desk and write with my students. After all, modeling is still the most powerful method of teaching. Once my students demonstrate the ability to accomplish this activity independently, I can attend to various managerial tasks: returning graded assignments, taking roll, assigning reading parts, and so on.

Although I immediately liked the way my students responded to this six-minute introductory activity, it took me several years to realize its true power. I have very few tardies, and discipline problems are nonexistent. When students do come in late, they know they are responsible for completing a journal writing as homework. Students are also responsible for turning in journal writings for each day that they are absent. I think discipline has rarely been a problem in my classroom because the tone for each period is established during the journal writing. The New Age music provides a calming background, while the topic leads them into the beginning of the day's activities. All of this happens with minimal overt direction from me. Occasional reminders like "Everyone is to be writing" and "You have about two minutes to finish up" are all that are necessary.

Journal writing provides a transition from the social nature of the hallways and enables my students to tune in to the class. During this transition, I subtly convey the message that I respect their ability to monitor themselves and that I expect them to act responsibly. Rapport is further reinforced through grading. I respond to my students' writings as an interested reader. I make positive comments, ask questions, relate my own parallel experiences, and highlight the best of what is presented. In this way, I foster trust and establish an open dialogue that carries over into other class interactions.

When I asked my students how writing a daily journal had influenced them, I found out that what I believed to be true about journal writing was in fact true for my students as well. As is obvious from the remarks cited earlier, students made a number of positive comments about their daily journal writing. They told me of how writing a daily journal entry had helped them discover the benefit of exploring their thoughts and emotions in writing, of how it had taught them the importance of coming to class on time, of how it had helped them see the usefulness of restating questions when writing short answers or essays, and of many other positive experiences.

I realize that journal writing is not a panacea for all our classroom management woes, but it can be a very effective tool. My students are not unusual; in fact, they are typical of any large urban high school. Our student population, which has maintained an average high-point enrollment of 3,100 students since 1986, is 56 percent Hispanic, 26 percent African American, and 18 percent Anglo. The number of students who dropped out was once as high as 22.2 percent; absence rates peaked at 16 percent; and the number of students who graduated dropped as low as 46.9 percent. Yet over the past four years, my school has been implementing a restructuring plan, and these statistics have changed dramatically. The dropout rate has been reduced to 10.8 percent; absenteeism has decreased to 9 percent; and last year 66 percent of our seniors graduated.

Writing has played a key role in improving our students' academic achievements. Writing has many merits and, ultimately, can be implemented by all teachers in all content areas with all students, regardless of age, diversity, or ability. And as I have been arguing, writing—daily journal writing in particular—can help define the parameters of our classrooms in meaningful ways. Journal writing creates an entrance; everything that follows, for the most part, is direction, adjustment, and response.

I work with seniors, students who are often set in their ways, have inflexible expectations about their learning, and are not easily persuaded to acquire new behaviors. My task is made more difficult because few of my colleagues use journal writing, either on a daily basis or at all. Yet in just a short period of time, my students begin to see the value of this activity. And as they embrace its worth, their behavior changes. Michelle wrote, "Writing a [daily journal] is like a habit. It feels weird when I come to class and on that day we don't write." Daniel seemed to agree: "When I get to class, I take out a piece of paper, and second I look at the board, then I start writing whatever the [daily journal] is about." This transformation of student attitudes and behavior requires only an openness to their expressions and a few minutes to respond to their writings. In short, it's the only magic I know how to do.

How we teach, who we teach, and what we teach should be integrated and supportive components of the learning process. Since learning takes place through the context of interacting, why not create our classes in ways that are focused, flexibly structured, and challenging? In order to fulfill these goals, I believe that we must set the pace and convey our expectations in the first few moments of each class. Starting each class period in the way I've described here accomplishes this task. As LaVonne answered so frankly when I asked my students what would they say about daily journal writing to a new student, "Come to class on time just to write the journal. It's something to do at the beginning of the period instead of doing nothing." Richard was a little more eloquent: daily journal writing during the first six minutes "makes you a better writer."

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS—FUTURE ISSUES

The *English Leadership Quarterly,* a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary, secondary, or college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are always welcomed. Software reviews and book reviews related to the themes of upcoming issues are encouraged.

Recent surveys of our readers reveal these topics of interest: leadership training for the new department chair, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, the tracking/grouping controversy, problems of rural schools, the value of tenure, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

October 1994 (July 1 deadline)
Case Studies in English Leadership

December 1994 (September 15 deadline)
English Standards

February 1995 (November 1 deadline)
Multicultural and Multi-Ethnic Literature

May 1995 (February 1 deadline)
Technology and the Teaching of English

Manuscripts may be sent on 5.25- or 3.5-inch floppy disks with IBM-compatible ASCII files or as traditional double-spaced typed copy. Address articles and inquiries to Henry G. Kiernan, Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly,* Southern Regional High School District, 600 North Main Street, Manahawkin, New Jersey 08050 (phone 609-597-9481; fax 609-978-5372).

MEMBERSHIPS AVAILABLE IN COMMITTEE ON TRACKING AND GROUPING PRACTICES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOMS, K–12

A limited number of memberships in the recently extended Committee on Tracking and Grouping Practices in English Language Arts Classrooms, K–12, will be available to interested members of the Council. Major functions of the committee are to identify current tracking and grouping practices in English language arts classrooms, K–12, and to examine pertinent research; to define the social, political, and educational issues of tracking; to propose a statement which NCTE can distribute; to propose convention and conference programs for NCTE and other organizations; and to identify successful alternative strategies for English language arts classrooms. If you would like to be considered for membership in this group, send a one-page letter by June 1, 1994, explaining your specific interest in the committee, relevant background, and your present professional work to Candace Fatemi, Administrative Assistant to the Deputy Executive Director, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

NCTE is reviewing proposals for new volumes in its Classroom Practices in Teaching English series—a series that showcases effective teaching strategies and encourages teacher-writers to share their expertise. If you would like to edit a Classroom Practices volume, please contact us. Proposals should (1) describe the theme that will provide the focus of the volume, and discuss why it is of substantial interest to teachers of English and language arts; (2) identify the target audience (e.g., elementary teachers, middle school, etc.); (3) offer a general plan for the thematic structure of the volume (a tentative table of contents); and (4) give evidence of interested contributors or outline a plan for securing individual chapters. For more information and for prospectus guidelines, please write to the Senior Editor for Publications, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

1994 SHAKESPEARE-AT-STRATFORD

Western Washington University will again offer the course "Shakespeare-at-Stratford" for the fifteenth summer in collaboration with the University of Birmingham, England. The tour will be led again by Dr. Arthur Solomon, Professor of Speech Emeritus.

The class, (Communication 437–4 credits), in the appreciation of Shakespeare's poetry and drama, will be based at Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, England, and taught by faculty of the Shakespeare Institute. Although many of the participants in the past have been teachers, the course is designed for all Shake-

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CALL FOR PROGRAM PROPOSALS

Leadership in Meeting the Challenges of Change

1994 CEL Conference, Orlando, Florida
Wednesday, November 16–Thursday, November 17, 1994

(PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY)

Presentation Title ______________________________

Will you need an overhead projector? ☐ Yes ☐ No

CEL cannot guarantee the availability of other types of audiovisual equipment.

Audience: ☐ Elementary ☐ Middle School ☐ High School ☐ College ☐ General

1. Contact Person (Please place an asterisk [*] in front of the preferred mailing address.)

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2. Names of other presenters: Attach an additional sheet with complete mailing information if there are others presenting with you.

3. Preferred Date

   We will attempt to honor your request; no guarantees are made, however.

   ☐ Wednesday, November 16, 1994
   ☐ Thursday, November 17, 1994

4. Type of session: ☐ individual ☐ panel ☐ debate ☐ round table

SESSION DESCRIPTION: Attach a concise description of your session, including objectives and possible outcomes. Also include a one-line synopsis that may be used in the program to describe the presentation.

Send the completed Program Proposal to:
Lorraine A. Plasse
1994 CEL Program Chair
41 Balboa Drive
Springfield, MA 01119

No proposals will be accepted by phone, but if you have questions, you may contact Lorraine at school (413) 787-7176 or home (413) 782-4175.

FINAL DEADLINE: PROPOSALS MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN MARCH 15, 1994.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Proposals need not be limited to the theme, although its use as a guideline is helpful to the planning committee.
2. Proposals should be imaginative and innovative, with clear objectives and methods of presentation. Titles, descriptions, and appropriate grade levels must accurately reflect the material to be presented. No changes in topics should be made after acceptance.
3. Proposals may be for (a) roundtable discussion, in which the leader encourages discussion from all participants; (b) debate, in which two or more leaders present opposite sides of an issue, possibly encouraging audience participation; or (c) small-group presentations, in which the leader presents information, allowing a period for questions at the end.
4. As a nonprofit organization, CEL cannot offer to presenters an honorarium or registration, meal, lodging or other expenses.
5. Please make copies of this form to share with others who would like to make presentations.
6. Individuals may be involved in more than one presentation.

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speare enthusiasts whether teachers, students, or the general public, and is aimed at enhancing the enjoyment and understanding of the world's most renowned playwright.

The dates for the tour will be on July 2nd through July 17th. An earlier departure or a later return can be arranged for those wishing to travel abroad before and after the tour.

The tour price of approximately $2,600 includes round-trip airfare from Seattle, 14 nights lodging at Stratford in guest houses with breakfast and dinner each day, tickets to the production of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company, all travel, excursions and entrance fees in England, visits to the Shakespearean properties, a day's trip to the Cotswolds, visits to Warwick, Broughton, and Kenilworth castles, a day in London, some hours in Oxford, and W.W.U. tuition.

The cost figure is based on the current exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and the British pound, the airfare, and a minimum enrollment of at least 15 people. For teachers, almost all of the cost will be tax deductible for "educational expenses undertaken to maintain and improve skills required to one's employment." Consult your local IRS for eligibility.

For applications and further information, send inquiries to:

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Western Washington University
Bellingham, WA 98225

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Sidney, OH 45365

Ad Hoc Associate Chair
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Kitchener, Ontario
Canada N2B 2S7

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University of South Florida
Tampa, FL 33620

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Community College–Terry Campus
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Bill Newby
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15911 Aldersyde Drive
Shaker Heights, OH 44120

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Highland Park, IL 60035

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Valley High School
Gilcrest, CO 80623

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Leadership for Excellence

Conference on English Leadership

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Editor: James Strickland

In This Issue

INNOVATIONS AND CLASSIC IDEAS

by James Strickland, editor

It's funny to think that when I began this venture six years ago, I was in the midst of moving to a new house in Pittsburgh, getting ready to begin a new life. Now, as I put the finishing touches on my final issue as editor, I'm once again surrounded by moving boxes, getting ready to close on another house, this one much closer to campus. And while I'm not changing my life in anywhere near the dramatic sense that I did when I married Kathleen in 1988, I'm handing over the editing tasks of the *Quarterly* to Henry Kiernan and taking on the editing responsibilities for *Scholars*, an interdisciplinary research journal published by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Like the house move, I guess, I'll be doing the same stuff but in a different location. So I'm feeling a Zen sort of cyclic blending of the old and the new. And just as when I began, I'm comforted to have old friends and new to help me.

Jim Burke is a new friend I met at the CEL luncheon in Pittsburgh; he was sitting next to Carol Jago who was to receive our writer's award at the banquet. In fact, she introduced us by saying, "Here's someone you should get to write for you." I asked politely for a submission, and Jim came through with "The Standards Movement Explained and Considered," a thoughtful guide to the standards movement, including a review of its various aspects, major players, and announced agendas. I found it very helpful.

Rick Chambers, a member of the CEL Executive Committee, is an old friend to the *Quarterly*, having written numerous pieces over the years. I always enjoy hearing what Rick is doing at Grand River Collegiate Institute in Ontario; he's the kind of teacher they should use to set the standard. Rick offers his "Classic Assignment" by way of this year's innovation.

Another new twist on a classic idea is done by Rocky Colavito. "Local Color—Local Voices" is Rocky's version of the "my hometown" assignment, used this time to teach original research. Rocky developed this assignment when he was teaching in Arizona, and now that he's in Louisiana, I'm sure he'll help students discover their own local color.

Joy Marks Gray, like Rocky and Rick, is an old friend and frequent contributor to the *Quarterly*, having recently written an award-nominated piece describing what happened when she let her students write their own exam questions. This time she tells what happens when teachers are serious about creating student-centered classrooms. Her students, like Rocky's and Rick's, gain their own voices. But it doesn't happen easily; students are too used to being directed, and teachers are too comfortable directing. I had a student come back from student teaching and tell me during class, "Students don't like that group stuff in circles. They confided to me that they learn better when the teacher lectures in a traditional classroom." I'm going to suggest that she read "One Teacher's Odyssey Toward Better Teaching."

The author of "The Surprise of Teaching" should be no surprise; it is Carol Jago, one of my dearest friends from my years as editor. I see her only once or twice a year at national conventions, but she lets me read her articles on a much more regular basis. I'm

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really going to miss her contributions. To paraphrase her article, I feel sorry for people who don't get to edit English teachers from Santa Monica High School in California.

Lest anyone think I've loaded this final issue with old friends, two new writers from South Dakota, Constance Hoag and Maurine Richardson, offer a lesson in appreciative listening. I think teachers will really appreciate their extensive bibliography of literature to enhance the listening aspect of language arts.

And finally, I close the issue with one of my oldest friends, Bill Williams, who has more than once patiently explained concepts such as deconstruction, poststructuralism, and hermeneutics to me. Bill has not only written many favorably received articles for the *Quarterly,* he has also been willing to serve as our resident book reviewer. This issue he reviews *Responding to Student Poems: Applications of Critical Theory,* a new book by Patrick Bizzaro.

Before I echo the sentiments of Woody Guthrie, singin' "So long, it's been good to know ya," I would be remiss if I didn't thank several people at NCTE: notably Bob Heister, who was more a mentor than an editor for my first four years, and Marlo Welshons, who followed him at NCTE, doing such a terrific job that she's been given more editorial responsibilities (some say more work). I'd also like to thank Jane Christensen for believing in me, Cliff Maduzia for years of friendship, Candy Fatemi for the inside advice about *Lovejoy,* and some admirable leaders of the Conference on English Leadership: Emil Sanzari, Wendell Schwartz, Myles Eley, Paul Bellin, and Don Stephan. So long, and thanks.

THE STANDARDS MOVEMENT EXPLAINED AND CONSIDERED

by Jim Burke
Burlingame High School, San Francisco, CA

A year ago last April, the California Curriculum Study Commission invited me and other members of the Central California Council of Teachers of English to spend a weekend discussing the standards movement, specifically trying to understand our role in and attitude toward this movement. During that weekend, we shared a hope that parallel lines of reform could and would meet; otherwise, we felt, how would the many various groups developing standards ever arrive at a place where they could mutually decide to move forward with one agreed-upon standard for what students and teachers should know and be able to do? Since then, so constant has been the discussion of the movement toward standards, so seemingly uncoordinated at times has been the effort to create the standards, that I have come to wonder not only whether these parallel lines of reform will ever meet but whether they are in fact parallel lines. I offer this article in hopes of gaining a better understanding of standards by discussing the current efforts under way, focusing in particular on those projects in which the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has involved itself.

Origins of the Movement

Much of the current effort to reform education through the development of standards seems to have derived from a simple, essential question that came in response to and as part of *A Nation at Risk*: What should our kids know and be able to do? From this question myriad others spring: Why should they know those things? How will we know whether they know and can do those things? While it is difficult to say exactly who first asked this question—insofar as it got the discussion rolling—credit most likely goes to Lamar Alexander and those governors who worked with him on the President's Education Summit. It was Alexander—a former governor of Tennessee and then Secretary of Education under President Bush—who in 1991 persuaded Congress to establish the National Council on Educational Standards and Testing (NCEST), a group that assumed responsibility for the development of standards for all subject areas, a body that Diane Ravitch describes as broadly representative of teachers, civic leaders, political leaders, policymakers, and people in higher education, all under the bipartisan leadership of governors Roy Romer of Colorado and Carroll Campbell of South Carolina. When Alexander became Secretary of Education, he set out to allow those leaders of reform a place at the national roundtable; to this table he invited Ravitch, currently a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, whom he appointed to lead the development of new national standards and assessments. In Alexander's mind, all such efforts toward educational reform were intended to support the national education goals which eventually emerged under the name of America 2000. President Bill Clinton worked with Alexander to develop these goals, since as a former governor Clinton was one of the key players in the governors' association; the goals of America 2000 remain with us to this day, little changed under the leadership of Secretary of Education Richard Riley, a former governor and therefore himself a member of the governors' panel.

Ravitch (1993, "Launching a Revolution in Standards and Assessments," *Phi Delta Kappan, 74,* 767–772) spells out the three fundamental objectives of America 2000:

1. To encourage every community to adopt the national goals, develop its own local strategy, and prepare an annual community report card on its progress toward the goals.
2. To stimulate the creation of thousands of "break-the-mold schools" that would approach education in totally new ways to meet the needs of today's children and families.
3. To develop voluntary "world-class" standards and American Achievement Tests.

The rationale behind the objectives of America 2000:

- Innovation is required to reimagine and re-create what students' learning experiences look like.
- These students must then be held accountable for their learning by accepting the responsibility for achieving certain standards.
- These standards must be able to be reached through diverse means which accord with the desires and values of individual communities, while at the same time meeting nationally recognized standards of excellence as determined by the members of the teaching profession.

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Asked by a reporter covering NCEST if national standards would lead to a national curriculum, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Al Shanker said simply, "Yes." Shanker went on to explain his contention that we already have a national curriculum—one imposed by textbooks. While the discussion of a national curriculum is almost unavoidable, it is not part of NCEST's agenda nor the task it is charged with. NCEST, in its 1992 report, recommended the creation of voluntary national standards in key subject areas. The notion that these standards are "voluntary" is essential: no one, to my mind, has yet spoken of standards in terms of government-imposed requirements. Colorado Governor Roy Romer believes that the standards that will be recommended as voluntary will be so good that all school districts will want to adopt them (1993, "National Standards: Change in U.S. Education?" *Education Writers Association Backgrounder*, #19).

NCTE and the Affiliate Network

The opportunity to develop these subject-specific standards was made available through a competitive process, whereby different groups applied for federal grants that would fund the effort to create standards for each particular subject area. After applying, NCTE—in conjunction with the International Reading Association (IRA) and the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois—was awarded the contract to "write a description of the nation's standards in the teaching of English" (November 1992, "U.S. Standards for English: NCTE Involved," *The Council Chronicle, 2*, 1). NCTE and IRA distinguished themselves by being two of the few subject-matter teacher organizations to win the award, along with their counterparts in math, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Standards in other areas are to be developed by outside organizations such as the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA, the National Academy of Sciences, the Council for Basic Education (art), and the National Council for Geographic Education.

Concurrent with NCTE's involvement in the Standards Project for English Language Arts (SPELA), NCTE established an Affiliate Standards Network to involve teachers at all levels in the articulation and development of frameworks, standards, and vignettes. Working under the assumption that any conversation about standards must include those who know the most about teaching English language arts, NCTE further asked teachers to look to teachers for exemplary practices and to solicit examples of such teaching and student work to use as an exhibition or demonstration of what is expected.

The Standards Project

Briefly outlined, the Standards Project for English Language Arts (SPELA) is directed by the National Board for Standards in English Language Arts, a public board chaired by former NCTE President Janet Emig. The Standards Project, which expects to complete its work in early 1995, consists of three Project Task Forces: Early School, Middle School, and High School. Its stated goal is to

> articulate standards for classroom instruction and student learning, helping teachers establish English language arts curriculum based upon the best research and the most current knowledge about literature, composition, reading, and oral and visual communication. The goals for the project are to create standards that assure all students in the nation's schools the opportunity to develop their unique verbal abilities and to become fully literate citizens in a democratic society; that guarantee access to the most creative and effective English curricula available; and that define a common core of what we value in the teaching and learning of language, emphasizing local involvement and development of standards (April 1993, "NCTE Affiliate Standards Network Plan").

As one can tell just from the description of its objectives, the Standards Project aims to do nothing less than challenge teachers as well as students through these significant and substantial standards (which brings up another aspect of the standards movement that I will return to shortly—teacher standards). If NCTE and its affiliate members succeed in developing workable, rigorous standards for the learning and teaching of English language arts, they will contribute to the fundamental change in students' learning experiences in the future.

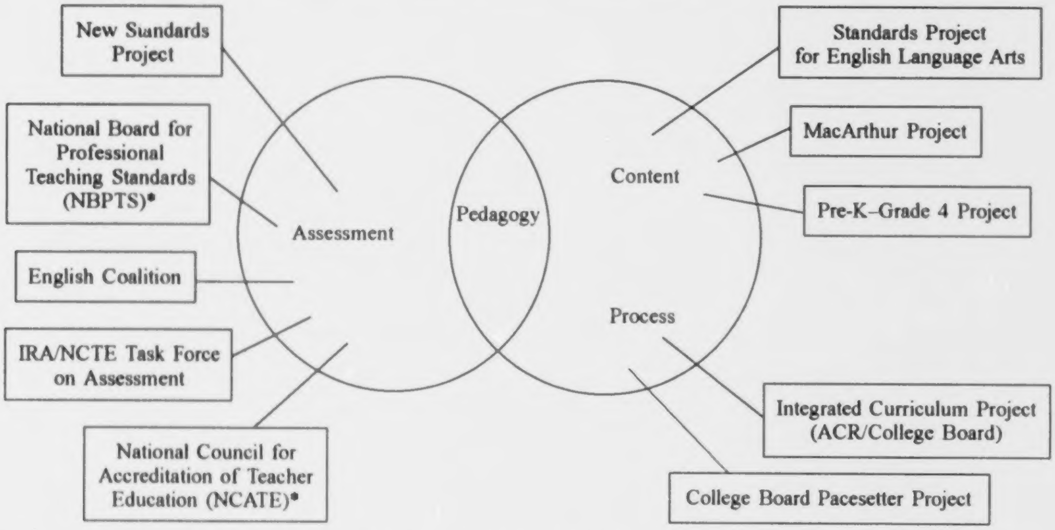
This past summer the Affiliate Standards Network was established, and the work begun. As the chair of the Central California Council Standards Project, I prepared the materials for those who have signed on; we met last fall to discuss how we should proceed. Others have gone on to begin the work on their own: some, such as Tom Gage, Affiliate Standards Network Chair for the Redwood Council of Teachers of English, have endeavored to start the dialogue at the district level by inviting teachers throughout the district to contribute ideas or exhibitions for consideration. These exemplary practices, vignettes, and standards will then be delivered to the Standards Project, which in turn will include those portions of our work that they feel are important in their final document which will ultimately, in early 1995, be delivered to NCEST. During the next two years the dialogue about content standards will continue at local, state, and national levels. Drafts of the SPELA documents will be shared with chartered task forces whose feedback will be solicited and encouraged. Prior to such delivery, the Standards Project will release a draft to members of the Affiliate Standards Network for our examination and comments.

Other Developments

NCTE is also involved in other standards projects currently under way. It is easiest to understand the different standards projects by breaking the educational domain into several spheres: assessment, pedagogy, and content and process. Figure 1 (see p. 4) tries to explain the different roles NCTE is playing in the standards movement.

The New Standards Project. The New Standards Project seeks to develop a new system of assessments designed to improve the performance of all students and to gauge student progress toward high national education standards. The New Standards Project is totally separate from the Standards Project (SPELA) discussed above (April/May 1993, "Outline of Standards Projects NCTE Is Currently Involved With," *NCTE Council-Grams*, p. 1). Instead of being funded by the government within the framework of America 2000, the New Standards Project gets its support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, partner states, and school districts; it is directed by professionals from the Learning Resource Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and the National Center on Education in the Economy, in addition to NCTE.

The Pacesetter Project. Perhaps the most interesting and certainly the most potentially controversial involvement for NCTE is the Pacesetter Project, designed to "reflect the consensus of educators in all subject areas on what all students should know in certain subjects before they graduate from secondary school" (May 4, 1992, Karen De Witt, "College Board Announces Project to Alter High School Curriculum," *New York Times*). The twelfth-grade Pacesetter English course "combines literature and communications and includes student portfolios, letters, diaries, speeches, and essays. Students will tackle both classical and contemporary


New Standards Project
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)*
English Coalition
IRA/NCTE Task Force on Assessment
National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)*
Assessment
Pedagogy
Content
Process
Standards Project for English Language Arts
MacArthur Project
Pre-K–Grade 4 Project
Integrated Curriculum Project (ACR/College Board)
College Board Pacesetter Project

*These projects deal with setting standards and developing certification for teachers.

Fig. 1. NCTE involvement in the standards movement (source: National Council of Teachers of English).

texts to see how they understand major human concerns. The course is intended to elicit more than the ability to decipher a literal meaning; it involves understanding and interpreting a wide range of texts, whether novels, speeches, motion pictures, or official documents. In independent reading groups, students might pair works such as Shakespeare's *Othello* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* looking for commonalities" (Winter 1993, "The College Board's Strategy for Educational Reform," *The PACESETTER Letter,* p. 2). Pacesetter, described by the College Board as "an integrated program of standards, teaching, and assessment" can perhaps best be compared to the Advanced Placement (AP) course insofar as it will have a curriculum that will result in what is expected to be a more authentic assessment than the current test for AP courses. NCTE, along with such organizations as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, is working to help develop the curriculum and the accompanying assessments. However, Pacesetter is not designed to replace the SAT or AP tests; rather, it is a plan for a course that is envisioned as a rigorous culmination of a student's secondary education. The College Board's stated strategy, integrated into its two main reform efforts—Pacesetter and Equity 2000—is to "push students toward a goal of high standards of achievement for all students before graduating from the twelfth grade. The goal of both projects is to eliminate tracking and advance educational excellence for all students" ("The College Board's Strategy," p. 2). It was this last point—to eliminate tracking—that allowed NCTE to support the establishment of a partnership between NCTE and the College Board. They, too, are in the process of developing standards and their means of assessment and are looking to those in the profession for suggestions and comments.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. As mentioned earlier, the discussion of standards includes not only standards for what students should study, but standards for how teachers teach. No other organization has devoted itself to standards for teachers so completely as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Devoting itself primarily to research and development after it was founded in 1987, NBPTS has gone on to develop the beginnings of a new national certification of teachers that can best be compared to the equivalent of the bar, the medical license, or the CPA. The stated goal of NBPTS is to establish "high and rigorous standards for the teaching profession" through a series of exacting evaluations that require teachers to develop a portfolio of their work, using interviews, essays, videotaping of their actual practices, on-site observations, subject-matter examinations, oral defenses of teaching portfolios, or any combination of these methods. A rigorous process, the NBPTS certification is about to field test its first certificate: teachers of English language arts to early adolescents and those "generalists" who work with early adolescents.

NBPTS distinguishes its certificate from the teaching credential we are currently required to have by saying that the current credential is intended "to protect the public interest, and especially young children, by requiring that new teachers meet minimum, threshold levels of competence. The purpose of National Board Certification . . . is to recognize those experienced teachers who meet advanced standards of knowledge and practice and who wish professional and public acknowledgment of their superior professional skills" (1993, "Q & A," The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards). More recently, NBPTS changed its policy to require that candidates for national certification must hold valid state teaching licenses, perhaps to address concerns raised about the distinctions that will be made between the two certifications (March 31, 1993, Ann Bradley, "National Board Revises Prerequisites for Certification of Teachers," *Education Week,* p. 5). One must also have taught for three years and have graduated from an accredited teacher education program to qualify for National Board Certification.

Closing Comments

The work toward standards—in what both students and teachers should know and be able to do—is important, for it holds the potential of establishing standards that will validate and support what the best teachers do and to challenge all students in meaningful ways. If it succeeds, the standards movement will fundamentally alter not only what school means, but how teachers are prepared, and how students experience their learning.

My concern, however, is that with so many groups we run the risk of having too many cooks and a spoiled broth that began with the promise of great medicinal power. For example, we now have the America 2000 people proposing educational delivery standards which might well work at cross purposes with the already extant projects such as those I have discussed. What is essential to the success of these efforts, however, is the support and involvement of all professionals; NCTE and its affiliates need to hear what their members have to say about standards, to include their recommendations in the affiliates' documents and recommendations to NCTE. And the teachers' unions, both of which are represented on the board of the NBPTS by their respective presidents, must work diligently toward an increased professionalization of their teachers, not simply for increased job security.

What remains a steady theme throughout all these standards projects, however, is the question of the role of the government. It remains for communities, for states, for districts to decide how they will organize their students' learning experiences to meet the national standards of the future; it remains the responsibility of schools to do what they can to help their teachers achieve those standards of teaching that will benefit all; the teachers have the responsibility to see that they themselves remain committed to these ideals of excellence. Standards hold the promise of pushing us all to be better; they also hold in them all the potential to self-destruct in the ensuing arguments between the various disparate parties who are eager to maintain that their standards are not only the best, but moreover the right ones.

A CLASSIC ASSIGNMENT

by Rick Chambers
Grand River Collegiate Institute, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

My senior English class and I started with the question, "What's a classic?" Immediately, they wanted to know how I was using the word *classic*: a classic what? So I asked, "How is *classic* used as an adjective these days?" My seniors came up with lots of examples: classic painting, classic rock 'n' roll, classic radio, classic television, classic films, classic cars, classic comics, classic novels, and classical music.

We tried defining *classic* by giving examples of these things. Does classic rock 'n' roll include Buddy Holly and Little Richard, musicians who provided inspiration for the Beatles? Are the Beatles classics as well? Is Jimi Hendrix's work classic? Is Guns 'n' Roses' music classic yet? There were various opinions, of course. Buddy Holly, Jimi Hendrix, and John Lennon are dead, and we wondered if that helped to classify them as classic artists, or does their work qualify as classic because they are dead?

Is *I Love Lucy* classic television? Why? The Nickelodeon cable network claims that many recycled television programs are classics: *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, and even *Get Smart*. So where does that leave *Life with Riley*, *Gunsmoke*, and *Dobie Gillis*? Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz are dead, like Buddy Holly and company: does that make their show a classic, or was it the writing, acting, filming, and marketing that make it classic?

What are classic cars? Was the 1957 Chevrolet BelAir a classic? Automobile historians and car enthusiasts probably have textbook definitions somewhere, but for most of us using the term casually, we tend to ask whether the Edsel was a classic, or a classic mistake? My neighbor claims that his mint condition 1963 Corvette is a classic; at least, the person who sold it to him said it was. So, is a 1936 Dodge a classic if it's still on the road today? Is the Model T Ford a classic?

When asking students about classic films, their experience is really contemporary and money-oriented. They thought that *Sleepless in Seattle* was not a classic, and never would be, because it didn't make enough money at the box office. *Jurassic Park*, on the other hand, made millions, and so it probably was a classic. What about old films, I asked. What about *Jaws*, *The Wild Bunch*, *The Godfather*, *Blow Up*, *Stagecoach*, *Battleship Potemkin*, *City Lights*, *Citizen Kane*? Are *Aladdin* and *The Little Mermaid*, two animated Disney films, to be considered classics, as the Disney marketing people tell us? Or were they just long cartoons? Is *Roger Rabbit* a classic, with its innovative style, or are only the early Disney animated films considered classics—like *Snow White*? And why was *Snow White* a classic, and Disney's animated *Robin Hood* not?

The students seemed to enjoy talking about these ideas; however, being practiced at playing school, they were waiting for the other shoe to drop: what was the point of this chitchat about classics? I took the opportunity to introduce the topic of classic literature. Why are some books considered classics, and others not? Who decides? On what bases are the decisions made? What are the criteria for determining whether a book is a classic or not? Could we decide as a group what books are classics, and what books aren't? Could we as individuals define the term *classic* as it refers to literature so that we would have some practical guidelines for deciding whether books were classics or not?

The group thought that we were up to this challenge. So here's what we did. I gave them six well-known pieces of literature from which to choose, choices constrained by what books we had available in the school and by what ones I guessed most students wouldn't have read by their senior year. With a supply of ten copies each, I introduced the following titles to the class: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Heart of the Matter*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Death of a Salesman*. Most students had heard of the authors, but hadn't read the material. I briefly described each book's story line, and then allowed the students to browse through various selections, some taking them home overnight to make a decision on what book they would like to read.

Their assignment was multifaceted. My plan was that all six titles would find readers, and then the students, working in groups, would prepare study booklets on the book of their choice to share with the rest of the class. The groups would present their information in written form, and then orally for the class so that we could ask clarifying questions, as well as having written material to which we could refer afterward. That way, everyone would have information on the six titles, and each group would be experts on one title.

These were the instructions for the written presentation: Prepare a study booklet to share with the class on the book of your choice. The booklet will contain:

1. An outline of the plot, using a graph, details, and discussion of the conflicts, resolutions, climax, and denouement (structure).
2. Character descriptions of three pivotal characters in the book, indicating their influence on the plot, theme, and character development.
3. Identification of themes that engage or address the human condition (consider themes of love, hate, trust, betrayal, honor, honesty, integrity, change, prejudice, relationships, the family unit, fate, religion, patriotism, class differences, social status, race, etc.).
4. A statement explaining the group's decision about whether the book should be considered tragic or not.

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5. A discussion of the setting's influence on character, plot, and theme.
6. An indication of the tone of the book, and how it was created and sustained.
7. A note on the book's point of view, and audience.

As it turned out, no one selected *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, but there were readers for all the other titles. The groups met, assigned tasks to their members, and headed off to read their books. Every few periods, the groups would meet to discuss their reading and to make sure that they were all still on the same track. My job was to move from group to group, clarifying and explaining where necessary, but mostly listening to the students' impressions and ideas. When the class readings were finished, the groups worked at finding the information for their booklets. No secondary sources were recommended: through discussion, most groups were able to find information for each of the points needed for the booklets.

The expensive part of this project turned out to be the photocopying necessary to prepare a sufficient number of booklets for every student in the class: the students, taking the booklet preparation task very seriously, generated a lot of information on a lot of paper. Each booklet was word processed in its final form and easily (though not cheaply) reproduced.

The student presentations were informative; each group had its own booklet to present. Essentially, each group took turns walking the rest of the class through the booklet, but focused on the story lines, the characters, and the themes. As a large group, we discussed why each of the books might be considered a classic, and the similarities and differences that each contained. The object was not to draw conclusions yet about the book's status as a classic: that would be the next part of the assignment.

After all the presentations were made, the final part of the assignment was due: Individually, students were to write an expository essay defining what a classic is. Proof and examples would be taken from the class-prepared booklets and discussions. Predictably, this was the hard part, but it was the most interesting, too. Did a classic have to be more than 50 years old? Could someone now living write a classic? Is the "test of time" a valid criterion? Are classics measuring sticks for other works? What elements does the classic contain that other works don't have?

Students struggled with their definition of a classic, based on their reading of the book that they had chosen and their reading and listening to the other presentations in class. Here are some samples of students' writing:

> In classics such as *Wuthering Heights*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *The Heart of the Matter*, characters, plot, and themes endure because they are relevant to present day readers. . . . A classic deals with moral issues which apply to the lives of people in many times. A theme which is relevant contributes to the ability of the classic to stand the test of time. (Julie Cook)
>
> Themes . . . reflect the human condition. . . . In *The Heart of the Matter*, themes of trust and betrayal, honesty and integrity, class differences, religion, and love and hate, are all closely tied to the behavior and relationships of people today as they were in the past. Similarly, the themes of real love vs. infatuation, prejudice, and fate shown in *Wuthering Heights* are easily [related to] the reader's own experiences. A relevant and understandable theme is essential for a novel to be read generations after it is written.
>
> The endless conflicts between characters, the false love, lust, and forced marriages help to create an exciting, tantalizing story, which will always be fascinating to read. Without a high level of entertainment value, the novel will not be read, and thus cannot stand the test of time. (Andrew Wahl)
>
> The definition of a classic can be compared to a recipe: certain ingredients are needed, yet different types of each ingredient can be mixed together in various combinations, making each dish unique. . . . A classic is a memorable work of literary superiority that stands the test of time and experiences widespread notoriety because through elements of theme, character, and plot, it comments on the human condition.
>
> Classics reflect society. A real classic presents a situation, characters, and themes, and then leaves the reader to form his/her own opinions. True classics not only entertain; they evoke strong emotional responses and provoke reflection. (Theresa Rundstedtler)

Evaluation of the project was multifaceted as well. Group work, the booklet writing and presentation, and the essay writing process and product were all part of the total evaluation. Assessment forms and rubrics were shared with the class beforehand, so everyone knew the basis for evaluation.

This classic assignment was a great learning tool for the students and for me. It allowed me to see works from a student's point of view and helped me to understand what the students already know. For example, most elements of the booklet presentation were handled very easily by the student groups. There was no need for me to reiterate any of the terms or ideas from the booklet assignment, something I probably would have done if I had taught a classic novel in my traditional manner. After all these years of playing school, students knew literary terms quite well. I learned that students often needed some historical background to put some of the reading in perspective, and traditionally we might have spent much more time investigating the "times." But the nature of the assignment was to determine the relevancy of the classics to today's audience, so the history lessons were kept to a minimum.

The students were pleased with their reading, their discussions, and their written work. They wanted to find answers and worked hard at the assignment. The challenging part was thinking through the information, and trying to formulate their own definitions. Some complained that their heads "hurt," that all this thinking was really a strain. A few wanted to know if they could just take a dictionary definition and then illustrate it using the books we had read. I found that I didn't have to answer that question because other students in the class posed a series of "what if" questions to the dictionary people concerning the books we had read, and the issue of using someone else's definition was shelved.

The best part of this assignment was the authentic learning that took place. These students now have personal experience in dealing with a topic that is relevant outside of school. They have taken the time to think through the topic, and have come up with their own answers and definitions that they can use. If *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a classic because of its commentary on the human condition, then is *The Bridges of Madison County* in the same league? Does it have the same relevant kind of plot, timeless characters, and all-encompassing themes? Fifty years from now, will people still be reading it? Can we measure classic films, or television, or rock music in the same way?

For a few weeks this term, the classic assignment was a most enjoyable learning experience: critical thinking, authentic learning, process, product, measurable outcomes, and fun.

LOCAL COLOR—LOCAL VOICES: A FOCUS FOR STUDENT RESEARCH

by Rocky Colavito
Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA

"The fundamental bond that unites progressive generations of insiders is language and the knowledge and skills that language delivers."—Edwin Delattre

I used to teach at CAC/Aravaipa, one of the five campuses that constitute the Central Arizona College system, whose other branches are located at Signal Peak, Apache Junction, Sacaton, and the Florence Prison. CAC/Aravaipa's site stood like a sentry checkpoint at the entrance to Aravaipa canyon, 60 some miles northeast of Tucson. Its student population was drawn mainly from the bordering rural communities, some economically depressed, most depending on mining for their economies, and nearly all lacking the informational facilities that larger cities or towns enjoy.

Much of the history of towns such as Aravaipa resides in the elders, who very often turn up on campus because of the program CAC/Aravaipa extends to senior citizens to encourage attendance. These senior citizens are just part of CAC/Aravaipa's mixed student population.

As expected, student ability and experiential levels are as mixed as the population itself, and often students in any given class will have little or no knowledge of academic conventions or practices. The older students who populate classes have very often done little formal writing save for letters, and possibly diaries or journals.

I remember one particular student whose research paper was reminiscent of the tentative, walking-on-eggs type of work I received from high school sophomores in another teaching life. Though I would now generously term that research as "general," my previous response to this inability to engage a topic on anything more than a superficial level would have been to mistake the difficulty as a sign of a lack of motivation or intellectual capabilities. In this case I was perplexed, because the student turning in this essay happened to be roughly 20 years my senior and had been doing solid work throughout the semester. When I reviewed the portfolio I required for the class, I found that the student's earlier work, up to the research paper, had been firmly grounded in recounting tall tales or local history, an obvious point of interest for this particular student.

I became curious, and asked my classes what they knew about some of the subjects the older student had written about. At the time, I was understandably surprised by the depth of their knowledge and the enthusiasm shown in their discussions about everything local—from La Llorona (the Mexican cognate to the banshee, used as a threat by mothers to keep their adolescent daughters in line) to the history of the Asarco mine in Hayden (which had received negative press coverage recently in *The Arizona Daily Star*). I myself knew little about the community of Aravaipa, since like many of the faculty and administrators, I did not live in the area (I commuted from Tucson). I was, in Edwin Delattre's terms, an outsider to my students (1987, "The Insiders," in *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers*, ed. Theresa Enos. New York: Random House, pp. 56–64). Yet though an outsider, I have a naturally inquisitive mind that can appreciate a tall tale or folk story that helps to account for another's culture, upbringing, or the historical aura of an area. Once I shared with the students my interests and my ignorance, the students responded to me as someone who values the insiders' experiences and wants to learn from them.

It was after this discussion that I modified my stance on research papers (and other papers) for writing classes that I teach. I decided to require my students to write at least two essays per semester on some items of local history, and one of these assignments was to be an informative research paper. Because I openly share my inquisitive nature with them, the students, young and old alike, are provided with a chance to turn the tables and play teacher themselves, without having to worry too much about teacherly "interference" with their material.

The results of the "Local Color—Local Voices" assignment were mixed, just as they are in any first-year college writing class. Some of the better essays managed to create a sense of personal attachment to local artifacts. Take, for example, the following paragraph from an essay on a local church:

> The hall and the church still stand today, with vines growing up along its walls and people gathering at every mass held. It has been the church of my family for the last four generations. To have been baptized and make my holy communion in the same church that two of my own uncles helped to build means a lot to me. It's a memory that I will always carry. ("St. Helen's Church")

What I found most gratifying was critical thinking about topics; the students puzzled long and hard over what to choose once they found out how much history and culture their heretofore taken-for-granted communities actually held. In another essay, the writer manages to use visual detail that places the reader specifically within a local geographic landmark:

> Traveling a distance of approximately five hundred yards from my doorstep, I reach the base of the Oracle Ridge Trail. This thirteen mile foot and horse trail leads up the northern slope of the Santa Catalina Mountains, ends at the highest peak in the range known as Mount Lemmon, then drops a short distance to the small community of Summerhaven. The trail links two separate worlds, hot arid desert floor and cool forested mountain peaks. ("Mount Lemmon: A Land of Many Uses")

My use of local color and local history is nothing new; the core of the idea probably resides in the popular assignment of "My Hometown" for descriptive essays of memorable places. I gathered some useful suggestions on the use of local color and local history from Andrea Martine, a teacher at the Community College of Allegheny County, through her HarperCollins syllabus for English 101 entitled: "Pittsburgh: Our Classroom" (*The HarperCollins Fellowship Collection 1991*, pp. 7–9.) Her course, which "emphasizes the history, architecture, landmarks, and people of Pittsburgh, recently a city in transition" (p. 8), uses collaborative learning strategies to move students from classroom interaction outward to the community, accomplished primarily through a series of interviews, some of which culminate in inviting guests from the community to speak with the class. Her writing assignments include letters requesting information or interviews, a source of content for descriptive, narrative, and process analysis papers (and, of course, the research paper); essays of a historically oriented comparison/contrast nature that compare "old" Pittsburgh with contemporary Pittsburgh; and "a persuasive essay which encourages a traveler to visit our city" (p. 8).

Assignments focused on local history also help students avoid the traps of papers on traditional controversial topics like abortion, gun control, prayer in the schools (too much emotion injected into discussions, too many resources to wade through, the sheer infeasibility of trying to get the last word in such discussion). For one thing, it's easy to see how such topics subvert much of what we as teachers are trying to accomplish, because the traditional controversial topics immediately put the student into an adversarial relationship with the material and the teacher. The "adversary paradigm" (Janice Moulton's term) causes thinkers, and I would add students, to "translate earlier debates and discussions . . . as being between adversaries, a view that can skew our understanding of the entire enterprise" of the formation and dissemination of knowledge (October 19, 1991, Geraldine McNenny, "Arguing like a Woman: Feminist Epistemology and First-Year Composition," *RMMLA*, p. 5). This act of "translation" is what

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makes students' essays on the aforementioned traditional controversial subjects such a trying process. The already published work on an issue is the adversary because it is so multitudinous, and often highly technical or tenuous in authority. The students may also consider the teacher to be an adversary by believing that they must write "to" the teacher's belief system in order to get a good grade. Furthermore, if the student is not rewarded with a good grade, the instructor becomes an adversary who graded the essay as one who disagreed with the student rather than as one concerned with content or mechanics. Thus, by focusing assignments on local history, I hope to provide my students and myself with a respite from such topics, and the adversarial mentality that can accompany them. As the teacher, I can become an ally with the students rather than an adversary because of a real or feigned lack of knowledge, and the students are free to investigate stories and material that they know well.

Though geography and landmarks proved to be the most popular topic choices, perhaps the most effective papers were ones written by students who chose to focus on local "characters." I think what gave these papers much of their "life" was the use of interviews by the students, some of whom managed to talk with people who actually knew the characters closely. One lucky student even managed to interview the actual subject of her sketch. The following excerpt, from an essay profiling the Arizona writer Eulalia Bourne, shows a level of personal interaction with text that I found delightful:

> The first time I heard her name was approximately a year after her death. The local librarian, Mildretha Taylor, was talking about "Sister's" driving skills. Mildretha made mention of the fact that "Sister" liked to drive her truck down the middle of the road. Mildretha talked on about going to a cattle auction with "Sister," and "Sister's" reaction to having cow shit on the seat of her pants. I thought Mildretha was talking about her sister; it took some time and explanation for me to understand that the person in question was "Sister" Eulalia Bourne. After this period of explanation, Mildretha handed me the books Sister wrote with the comment: "You like to read. Tell me what you think of these." Inside, I found a local legend. I found a woman who did not portray the picture of a genteel, lady rancher. ("Sister Eulalia Bourne")

Many of my students think that their small town lives haven't exposed them to as broad a variety of experiences as those held by students at larger institutions, but assigning papers oriented toward local history or local color allows students to take advantage of many unexplored research tools that reside outside of the bindings of books or magazines. As Lynn Quitman Troika notes, "non-traditional students come to academe with resources not usually recognized in college . . . they come with legacies derived from situations and language that can enlarge the teaching [and learning] repertoire that teachers . . . can use" (1987, "Perspectives on Legacies and Literacy in the 1980s," in *A Sourcebook for Basic Writing Teachers*, ed. Theresa Enos. New York: Random House, p. 20).

Since the local histories reside primarily with the town elders, students learn to deal almost exclusively with primary sources furnished by interviews in and outside of class. My students are only too glad to inform me that very little written history of the towns is available. Answering their complaints about the paucity of written sources, I tell them: consider yourself as a potential contributor to the effort to get the history down on paper. This motivation invests the project with civic pride and, once again, the notion that somebody cares about what they're writing. One student, writing about a relative who is a local repository of history and folklore, used his interviews with the subject to bring times of her life into focus for the reader:

> Water had to be hauled to the house as the supply was from a mine shaft that sat back in an old tunnel on the side of the mountain. There were pipes leading to the corral some three or four hundred yards away, but none to the house. Aunt Daisy remembers a number of times when skunks got into the supply and she and her brothers had to bail out the whole supply and scrape all the mud off the sides of the shaft. . . . Entertainment at Sombrero Butte was usually in the form of visitors coming over for a game of cards, guitar playing and a big pot of beans and freshly made bread. Visitors were always greeted with open arms as there was a certain amount of isolation at the ranch. To visit friends and relatives Daisy would walk two or three miles up one side of the mountain and down the other to Copper Creek. ("Biography of Daisy Willeford")

From a teacher's perspective, the dearth of written material enables the students to become initial secondary sources, because it's up to them to translate the information they get from interviews into some sort of readable text that others can engage. This process is preferable to having the students engage already written secondary material, thus depending on the selections of other translators of primary material for their information. The bottom line: the interviews assure contact with primary material, which I see as the backbone of any effective research process.

The interviews also foster incorporation of collaborative learning in another fashion. The interview step in this assignment is pretty obvious to the students: the communities have been home to my students for most of their lives, so much of the history and legends is "common knowledge." Interviews held in class flow much more easily when the subject is something that both interviewer and interviewee know something about. For the occasional student from outside the area attending CAC/Aravaipa, it's an opportunity to learn something new about their classmates, and to provide classmates with perspectives about other areas. In any case, the classroom itself becomes a library, because the assignment requires at least one interview with a classmate from the local area. What's more, many of the students in the class know better than I do about where to get more information. Many is the time I've heard one student suggest who else in the community might be good to talk to, or direct an inquiring individual to resources housed, literally, in the morgue rooms of county offices. The networking possibilities are extremely valuable, and the task thus necessitates a lot of legwork on the students' part. Even those completely versed in local history aren't excluded from having to do work, since the research assignment requires that the interviews be reinforced by written documents.

The written documents part of the assignment is the part that students find both the stickiest and the most rewarding, because their search nearly always proves fruitful. Admittedly, I've thrown down a fairly challenging gauntlet to my students since they can't get information about a topic simply by turning to the encylopedia or *Time* magazine. The materials *are* hard to find, but the search encourages a multidimensional research plan from the students, with the focus again being on primary sources. Interviews in and outside of class are the most common place to start, and these often lead to suggestions about where else to look. It also encourages creativity; one past student, interested in the development of the railroad in the area, found himself in a model train store in Mesa, seeking a three-volume source that covers the building of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Still others have become familiar faces in the county seat offices, scrounging through records in search of information for their papers. The point is, the process encourages using less traditional sources and approaches to research, which seems to make the traditional process of using card catalogs and microfiche much easier by comparison.

The "Local Color—Local Voices" papers themselves were a varied lot in terms of quality, but I never once felt that I'd heard or read my students' discussions elsewhere. Suffice it to say that the endeavor to incorporate local color and history into the classroom at CAC/Aravaipa has been successful, and it's a task that seems to be applicable in many other contexts beyond the rural, as the Pittsburgh syllabus suggests. It certainly will let the teacher in for a bit more student complaining when it comes time to help them find sources, but the opportunities for collaboration among the students and the community outweigh the grousing that is bound to occur with any research task. Don't forget, also, that it's a chance for teachers to expand their own consciousness about the resources and history of the community in which they teach. Camilo Jose Celo tells us that "storytelling has been a decisive tool in every era and in all circumstances, a weapon capable of showing us where to head in the endless race for freedom" (1991, "Nobel Lecture 1989: In Praise of Storytelling," trans. Agnes Money. *PMLA, 106:* 17). Although I'm not comfortable with Celo's choice of the word *weapon* in the context of the classroom, I can vouch for the freedom that the focus on local stories provides.

ONE TEACHER'S ODYSSEY TOWARD BETTER TEACHING

by Joy Marks Gray
Gilmour Academy, Ohio

Each fall as students and teachers tentatively grope with each other's expectations, I often startle my new students. In fact, some of the students become downright uncomfortable about what I hope to see in their writing. They come to my class ready to produce a formulaic essay (thesis at the end of first paragraph, five paragraphs, 500 words) and are often jolted when I say I don't know how long their essays should be. "Write until it's finished" is my standard reply.

Where should the thesis be?

"Probably in the opening paragraph, but perhaps delayed until later and sometimes implied."

How long should paragraphs be?

"I don't know, but I'll know they're too long if they're redundant, and I'll know they're too short if they don't support what you're saying."

But, Doc Gray, how long do you really want our papers to be?

"Write until they're finished."

Often for the first time, my eleventh- and twelfth-grade students do not receive definitive answers—the sturdy guidelines that have kept them secure in the past. While much of their writing in the past might have been uninspired, produced according to tried-and-true patterns, at least those patterns existed for them, and they knew if they could follow those road maps, they could achieve success in their writing (or at least an *A* or a *B,* the student's equivalent of success in writing). That I'm taking away barriers and handing back control of their writing to them isn't fully believed at first (the little numbers penciled in the margins of early rough drafts to mark word counts testify to the difficulty of viewing writing as a whole rather than the sum of its parts). At each stage of the writing process during the first few essay assignments, I'm still asked, often pleadingly, for the magic answer: How long should this be? "Until it's finished," I reply.

But how did I get to be this kind of teacher? How did I change from the teacher-centered, teacher-controlling, writing-as-finished-product, literary-analysis-only-assigning English teacher of 17 years ago to who I am today? Like writing, my transformation has been a process, and like writing, not every step has been easy and not every finished work has been as successful as I would have wished. I've read *English Journal* and *English Leadership Quarterly,* attended workshops and conferences, talked endlessly with brilliant and enthusiastic colleagues experimenting piecemeal as I was in the classroom, tried and failed, and tried and succeeded.

I've grown to believe that all of my students are writers, that each has a voice and a style, and that much of their faulty and awkward writing was really my fault. After all, how inspired could a student be when asked to compare and contrast the responsibility of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth for their fates, or to discuss which Romantic poet best embodied the ideas of the *Lyrical Ballads,* writing in the third person, essay after essay after essay? My students viewed the key to good writing as saying what I would like to hear, not what they would like to say. And why not? The topics were mine; the structure was mine; the voice was mine.

Over the years I've made a number of changes, and as I have changed, so has the quality of student writing coming out of my classes. Like so many of us I've come to fully believe that writing is a process of thinking. While I had always asked students to do rough drafts, I had focused on the final product as the proof of a student's ability. Now we spend writing time together at all stages, and students come to see that their writing grows and changes, not just is. I used to assign only topics of literary analysis, related to our immediate class readings, with an "open topic" thrown in very rarely to foster student creativity. The "open topic" was so rare and unexpected, in fact, that half my students wanted me to give them topics ("I can't think of anything to write about"), and the other half wanted to write about something that they thought I'd be interested in instead of something that interested them, resulting in the same stilted writing that appeared in the literary analyses.

My students still do essays with literary topics, but their assignment might ask:

> "After reading *Canterbury Tales,* you have a good portrait of 14th century England. Create your own Canterbury pilgrim, write his/her prologue and a tale which reflects him or her."

Will this piece of writing reveal a student's comprehension of Chaucer and the times in which he wrote? Absolutely. Will it be stilted? Absolutely not.

Speaking of constrained writing, I used to require all essays to be written in third person, with the one exception of the "how to"/process essay. How much of an authorial voice can come through when constrained to say, "one can see that . . ."? My students and I have come to recognize now the validity of many different voices, all true to the author at different times: Personal narrative? First person, of course. Formal argument? Third person, perhaps interspersed with relevant personal incidents, such as found in Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," a peerless argument. Even the forbidden second-person *you* has a place, depending on the formality of the essay or the incident being written about. Students' own voices and thoughts begin to emerge, once freed from the constraints of formulating all thoughts in third person, and thus their writing actually becomes interesting.

I also grew to realize that if I was their only audience, I would keep locking students' writing into a too-familiar groove. So I grew into peer sharing. Wanting to concentrate on making introductory paragraphs a fascinating hook to draw a reader into the rest of the essay, I began to have students share their introductions with the class. And a magical thing happened. Not only did students begin to look for ways to entice their now-widened audience into their writing, but they discovered that they had a valid critical voice as well. Their comments as audience counted.

They too recognized good writing; they were not just writers but critical readers as well.

Anita, a very quiet student from Hong Kong who felt her English was awkward, held her audience spellbound as she described her first Cleveland winter. Suddenly everyone knew this young lady a little better, and her confidence blossomed as one of her classmates said with a wistful sigh, "I can't believe she can say those things so well when she's only been here two years." Whenever it was Chuck's turn to read, everyone clamored for his entire essay, not just for his introduction. Chuck had been creating a fictional dialogue between a young boy, Danny, and his grandpa as a narrative frame for many of his essays, and his classmates became so attached to the characters they couldn't wait to hear more. Was writing ever this exciting or interactive when I was the sole audience? Unfortunately not.

I moved from opening paragraphs into small-group sharing and editing of complete essays. I also moved into the world of journals, where written conversations can take place between me and my students and where ideas can be mulled over before they must be evaluated. I've found portfolios, where students can make their own judgments about their best works and think and write about why, as well as look retrospectively at where they were a year or two before. I've become high-tech enough to speak computerese and spend many class periods in the computer lab (one colleague has dubbed me "Captain Computer") as students compose, revise, interact with me and their peers, and revise some more.

The link through all these changes is students taking ownership of their writing, thus producing writing in their authentic voices. Perhaps the key change of all for me has been my slow development of topics for essays that allow my students to experience this ownership. Most topics I now assign allow them to be highly personal in their writing while still learning to write a variety of expository models. Because personal topics can be threatening as well as exhilarating, I always announce the following disclaimer: "I'll never know if you're making this up, will I? So be as creative as you need to be." Allowed that element of doubt—and safety—most students do write from their own experience.

Over the course of the years, I have stumbled upon some very successful topics:

1. Describe yourself from the point of view of someone else. (This is a particularly successful topic in allowing students to experiment with narrative voice while giving them the distance necessary to talk freely about themselves without self-consciousness.)
2. Compare and/or contrast a person or place you knew well when you were young with your perception of him/her/it now. (Students experience a real sense of their own maturation when writing on this subject.)
3. Give students a list of current debatable issues, and ask them to circle their position on each. Then tell each student to choose one issue and argue the opposing viewpoint. (Students discover that they have all the ammunition needed for the opposing side, making refutation of the contradictory viewpoint easy. Each year one or two students actually change their positions when asked to argue what they, at first, think they cannot.)

When creating literature-based topics, I look for ways in which students can deal with the important ideas while still expressing themselves:

1. After reading Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant," I ask them to write about what caused them to do something they wouldn't do normally and later regretted doing.
2. Upon completion of *Lord of the Flies*, I ask students to take a side in the Rousseau vs. Golding debate about the evil inherent in humankind, supporting their opinions not from the book alone but from observations about life.
3. After having examined the many "hearts of darkness" found in Conrad's novella, I ask them to explore a personal "heart of darkness" they have faced and see whether they felt they were permitted to draw back their feet as Marlow felt he was.

The ultimate results of my students' discovering their authentic voices and styles are manifold and exciting. The very students who once felt the need for definite page length begin to see themselves as writers, not as students who are writing; they, the writers, no longer need the validation of someone else's capricious rules of page or paragraph length. Their confidence builds as they view themselves as writers. The staunch pronouncements of "I'm no good at writing" and "I hate writing" begin to dissolve. More students than I can count have written or returned from college to announce, with a mixture of pleasure and astonishment, that they helped their roommates write essays, that they were looked upon as experts in writing, and that they were actually regarded by strangers as good writers!

And somewhere in the midst of all this, writing becomes fun as it loses its perfunctory quality. As students gain voice, they become vested in their own writing. And once that happens, watch out—real writers, ones who write with authenticity and speak from the heart, are born.

THE SURPRISE OF TEACHING

by Carol Jago
Santa Monica High School, California

When ex-students come to visit I often see reflected in their sweet eyes the question, "How could you still be doing the same thing after all this time?" Too polite to ask that question, they hint in subtle ways, fingering my ratty copy of *The Odyssey*, recognizing familiar assignments on the board. They can't quite believe that while their lives have been changing so dramatically since they graduated, mine has stayed the same. Or so they assume.

What I find impossible to explain to them is that while the externals might remain the same—the courses, the classroom, me—the students make my class different every time around. For example, I would have thought that in 20 years I had seen every possible variation of presentations of Book XIX of *The Odyssey*. I mean, how many different ways can 15-year-olds come up with to teach a portion of the text to the rest of the class? I would have thought I'd seen it all—dramatizations, game shows, videos, posters, puppet shows—except that every year they surprise me.

This year Miguel thought to translate his chapter into beat poetry, transforming our classroom into the famous City Lights Bookstore, with dimmed lights, music, and coffee all around. He wrote of Odysseus' first glimpse of his faithful wife, Penelope, after many years on the road home from the Trojan War:

> Odyshus [sic]
>   back
>   standing in his conquered doorway
>   and the descent of Penelope
>   like Athene's creation of tangible ecstacy,
>   and the suitors
>   have eyes
>   and weak knees
>   and burning towers for her,
>   dreaming of naked breakfast
>   naked lunch
>   naked dinner.

This beauty now speaks
that her son's beard is sprouting
and with it sprouts
her need for a new man
but the one with the greatest gifts;
and the suitors,
in hysterics,
insatiable,
lay their best treasures at her feet
while Odyshus is hip to the jive
and the scene
and digs his old lady
like never before.

Miguel's partner in this project had never heard beat poetry before, and the presentation set Natasha on her own reading odyssey. Imagine my delight as I overheard Shayna, sitting next to Natasha, offering to lend her copies of Ferlinghetti and Kerouac. Beat poetry had never been part of my *Odyssey* lesson plans, and probably won't be again for the next 20 years.

I would have thought I'd read every possible variation on a theme that a sophomore could write about Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, given that I've easily read several hundred. But Hilary found a new approach when she took on the persona of a detective to analyze the main character's actions.

"Saturday, September 16, 9:00 a.m.

"It was another baffling case, but then you don't hire a private eye for the easy ones. I'd planned to take the day off, but when a dame called Jago handed me the problem and offered me mucho moolah if it was solved, as well as an *A*, I knew I had to take the case. The lady gave me a document and said, 'Here. The woman who wrote this tried to commit suicide, and I want to know why. Search this for clues. I need the data by Monday.' The lady left, leaving me alone with my thoughts. Questions poured down like the rain outside: Who was this broad? Who was the dead girl? Why did Jago care that the kid killed herself? I had a feeling that before this was over, I'd be sorry I asked."

What impressed me in the text that followed this introduction was that Hilary didn't stop with the clever stance, but thoroughly examined the character's behavior, supporting the detective's opinions with quotes and specific examples from the story. It was a delight to read.

I feel sorry for people who don't get to be English teachers. Each group of students I work with makes familiar texts come alive for me in whole new ways. Each day is a surprise. Like Miranda when she first saw the likes of young men, I cannot help exclaim over my students, "Oh, brave new world that has such people in 't."

THE APPRECIATIVE FOCUS IN THE LISTENING CURRICULUM

by Constance L. Hoag and Maurine V. Richardson
University of South Dakota

Listening to learn and learning to listen are recognized as important curricular and personal goals. In the classroom, it is natural to ask who is listening and when should they be listening. Listening is something children are expected to do; children are required to be the receivers of information 57.5 percent of the school day, according to Miriam Wilt's 1950 research. This expectation is still taken for granted in the classroom today, even when children in elementary school do not understand *why* they must listen, *what* they are listening for, or *how* to successfully adjust their listening to fit a variety of listening opportunities.

Listening is viewed as a natural process, so commonplace, that educators have often been at a loss to know what examples, skills, activities to present in the classroom. Consequently, the amount of time spent with teachers talking and children struggling without purposeful listening directed by listening strategies goes on and on. However, if educational awareness may be measured by the number of current articles focusing on listening, it is apparent that educators are beginning to value the importance of teaching listening skills, as M. Jalongo (1991) reports.

Analysis of current literature determines that individuals are required to adjust to many different types of listening. Of the various types of listening, one of the most important is the appreciative, personalized listening involving individual impressions/stimulation and pleasure/enjoyment.

Appreciative Listening

"Appreciative listening is the ability to enjoy and savor what is heard," according to K. D. Bromley (1988). "It is an important part of teaching listening. Appreciative listening shares some similarities with evaluative comprehension: it requires constructing meaning by making generalizations, and it requires children to make judgements that go beyond what they hear. When children listen appreciatively they evaluate what they hear in terms of their prior knowledge. Children's appreciative listening begins to develop at an early age and continues to develop throughout their lifetime."

Enhancing the listening opportunities available in every classroom, especially the developing of appreciative listening through the sharing of literature, allows for practicing and enjoying listening and deemphasizing sequential skills. Such a focus permits educators to concentrate on appreciative listening to literature without formal testing or evaluation. Such practice of listening also develops an awareness and sets standards for more structured listening requirements that will be later demanded of the child.

Appreciative listening involves an emotional image-building process that is personal and individual, based on previous experiences, perceptions, background, motivation, interest, expectations, and mental set (Wolvin & Coakley, 1988). When beginning an appreciative listening literacy curriculum, teachers may consider expending effort to attend to appreciative messages, setting aside time to listen, adopting a physically and mentally receptive attitude, identifying the leisure-time listening most liked, and exploring new listening pleasures with curiosity. These approaches free the student to reflect upon and value past experiences, to visualize and to explore new worlds rather than being held accountable for knowledge or other lower-order thinking and listening skills (Wolff, Marsnic, Tacey & Nichols, 1983).

Children Listening to Children

Another type of listening often overlooked in the classroom is that of children listening to children. An ideal way for children to share these experiences is through the avenue of storytelling. Barker and Greene, cited in Nelson (1989), found storytelling to be a meaning developing "co-creative process." In addition, Nelson (1989) reports those processes to be (1) what the story is actually about and (2) how the story content personally affects the listener.

Nelson continues, "A story truly is more than just a story. It is like a multifaceted gem that can be seen many different ways by each viewer, depending on where she/he is standing. Some will see more sparkle and dazzle; others will see sharp geometric shapes; some will see brilliance; others will see natural beauty transformed. A story is what the listeners make it, depending on how closely they identify with it and how much experience they bring to the story."

Listening Models

Teachers can use several steps in encouraging children to listen appreciatively, including (1) the identification of things children like most, (2) verification as to why they liked those things, and (3) the observation of how these things liked or disliked most affected others (Nichols & Stevens, 1957).

Two of the most commonly used plans offer suggestions for increasing listening, the DLTA model and the SLA model. Either of these models provides structure and direction to the child's responsibilities.

The Directed Listening Thinking Activity (DLTA) reading model involves students making predictions about each story and then confirming or rejecting those predictions while the teacher reads the story (Stauffer, 1981). There are three steps to this model: (1) predicting, after preliminary examination of the book jacket, title, or introductory paragraph, (2) reasoning and predicting from succeeding pages, and (3) proving. This plan involves adaptation and organization of hypotheses.

The Structured Listening Activity (SLA) model involves five steps (Choate & Rakes, 1987). The first step is Concept Building, where teachers introduce the passage by relating the concept to the students' experiences. This step will assist in better text understanding and help students discuss pertinent vocabulary. The second step is Listening with a Purpose, where students are given a directive as how to listen for the important points without revealing the outcome. The third step is Reading Aloud, using visual aids to help students follow the text, while focusing attention and reinforcing concepts. The fourth step is Questioning, using three levels of questions to guide, discuss, and evaluate, balancing literal questions with interpretive or critical ones. Questions can often serve as cues to additional thinking and attention. The final step is Recitation, where students are guided in summarizing the story through retelling or elaboration of ideas.

"Children need to learn how to think about and react to what they hear. They need to participate in structured experiences that cause them to question, to sort, to organize, to evaluate and to choose. They need to learn skills that will enable them to be connoisseurs and rational consumers of auditory input" (Winn, 1988).

Summary

The appreciative listening curriculum is a natural environment in which to teach elementary students. In addition, we have compiled an appendix of appropriate literature to use to develop appreciative listening. The five categories are (1) enjoying sounds of language, (2) enjoying sounds of nature, (3) enjoying music, plays, and poetry, (4) sensitivity to language, and (5) participating in word play. We hope the titles suggested here will be of help in using listening and literature to achieve literacy.

APPENDIX: SUGGESTIONS FOR APPRECIATIVE LISTENING

Enjoying Sounds of Language

Across the Stream. Ginsburg, M. (1982). Greenwillow Books.

The Adventures of Paddy Pork. Goodall, J. (1968). Harcourt.

Ah-Choo! Mayer, M. (1976). Dial.

Are You My Mother? Eastman, P. D. (1960). Random House.

Ask Mister Bear. Flack, M. (1986). Macmillan.

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? Martin, B. J. (1983). Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Catch the Ball. Carle, E. (1982). Philomel Books.

Chicken Soup with Rice. Sendak, M. (1962). Harper.

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Book Review

Responding to Student Poems: Applications of Critical Theory.

Patrick Bizzaro. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1993.

by William F. Williams
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

Responding to Student Poems: Applications of Critical Theory is an excellent work for teachers interested in rethinking their approaches to teaching writing, not only poetry, and for graduate students getting ready to enter the profession. The strongest part of this work is that Patrick Bizzaro includes student poems, his responses to the poems from different perspectives, and the students' subsequent revisions of the poems based on the responses. The weakest part of the work is the need to encapsulate such complex and multidimensional critical theories as New Criticism, reader response, deconstruction, and feminism.

Bizzaro criticizes New Critical responses to student writing because the responses "enable a teacher to appropriate a student's text, since only one text exists, the one the teacher reads and thus rewrites" (p. 43). He offers three student poems, his comments as a New Critical reader, and the student revisions based on his comments. The revisions demonstrate the weakness of the method. The nature of the responses allows a student to simply go through and "correct" the writing and resubmit it. No serious reconsideration is encouraged, because the teacher has claimed authority over the student work. Bizzaro concludes that "New Criticism can be an effective tool in the evaluation of student poems if it helps students better understand what they want their poems to do" (p. 54).

Reader response permits the teacher to respond to student writing without appropriating the student text, avoiding what "is undesirable because it takes the power of writing away from the student" (p. 65). Bizzaro shows different response techniques, including taped responses, as a way of encouraging student revision without appropriating the student's text. Bizzaro demonstrates the value and corresponding weakness of responding to student writing from a reader-response perception: the resulting revisions in student writing tend to be more extensive and less predictable than do revisions resulting from New Critical comments.

Talking about deconstruction, although frequently attempted, is actually a logical impossibility. To talk about deconstruction would imply that the speaker was able to step outside the act of talking, a position from which to explain the discussion, a position only possible if we could use words that were less imperfect than those already being used, a position that is exactly what deconstruction denies. Bizzaro quotes Sharon Crowley's assertion that deconstructive pedagogy is an oxymoron. Nevertheless, he ignores the problem, and argues "that it is at least possible to 'design' a pedagogy based on deconstruction" (p. 94). Perhaps "informed by" deconstruction would be a wiser choice than "based on" deconstruction, thus avoiding a confusion of the distinction that is normally drawn between foundationalists and anti-foundationalists. Basing anything on deconstruction, it seems to me, would be like building a high-rise apartment complex on the San Andreas Fault.

Bizzaro explains his technique of responding deconstructively to student writing as an attempt to turn a student text against itself. By so doing he hopes to respond to the student's writing in a way that encourages revision without taking authority over the writing. However, no manner of revision is able to generate a text that cannot be turned against itself. No text, including Bizzaro's own, can exist without "Gaps, Silences, and Contradictions" (p. 97). Consequently, revision based on pointing out areas where the text exhibits these characteristics will fail to generate a new text that has avoided them. Nevertheless, Bizzaro says that "the teacher's job is to offer a reading that brings to light elements that may have been excluded in the students' efforts to make, as they have long been taught, a seamless text, a text in which contradictions are resolved" (p. 98). Revision to avoid contradiction is, a la deconstruction, impossible. The urge to respond to student writing without appropriating the student text is admirable; however, the theory which Bizzaro simplifies will not withstand the process of simplification.

Getting students to revise their work without simply correcting their writing according to the teacher's specification is a worthy approach. Obviously, doing the writing for the student is not valid. Taking authority over the writing is equally invalid. These are the two problems that Bizzaro sees as coming from a New Critical response to student writing, problems that are mitigated by a reader-response approach, but only further exacerbated by a deconstructive approach to writing.

Bizzaro's final attempt at appropriating a body of theoretical material to inform response to student writing involves feminism. He argues that we must learn to read as a woman, without setting out exactly what that concept might entail. His suggestions for a decentered, interactive, process-oriented classroom, one in which students have a voice in evaluation as well as in content discussion, are suggestions that would create a better learning environment than the traditional teacher-centered classroom. He concludes that feminism involves an approach to teaching and classrooms, not just a way of reading.

Finally, *Responding to Student Poems: Applications of Critical Theory* is at its strongest when looking at revisions based on teacher responses. It is at its weakest when reducing critical theories to classroom methods; though, it might be argued that any attempt at reducing critical theories is in itself a questionable activity. Within the limits imposed by the nature of the attempt, Bizzaro provides a competent survey of many of the important concepts in the field of critical theory. Overall, the book provides a helpful look at student writing and teacher response, the kind of look that can help teachers and future teachers shape and reshape their classrooms and their reactions to student writing.

Announcements

COUNCIL LIFTS BAN ON SOUTH AFRICAN INVESTMENTS

The Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English has voted to delete a proviso in NCTE's investment policy which prohibits investing in firms that do business in South Africa. The proviso had been in place since November 1986.

Conference on English Leadership Chair Donald Stephan said African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela's September 24, 1993, speech to the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid played a key role in his decision to support the policy change.

Saying that the "demise of the white minority regime has been determined, agreed, and set," Mandela called for an end to economic sanctions, a position that was supported by the South African Council of Churches.

Stephan said the political abandonment of apartheid policies isn't going to work unless it is supported by economic development. A former Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa, which he described as "very underdeveloped," Stephan said the importance of capital flowing into emerging nations cannot be downplayed.

"There must be an improvement in the standard of living in South Africa," Stephan said. "If there's anything I learned from living in an underdeveloped country, it's that people are people, and they need a sound economy to thrive."

The NCTE Executive Committee decision appears to be a sound financial one for the Council as well. NCTE's long-term investments had been in a South Africa-free fund which closed in late February 1994 after its largest clients transferred their assets to non-restricted funds. Other South Africa-free funds have been experiencing the same loss of clients. According to materials prepared by NCTE's business department, retaining a prohibition against firms doing business in South Africa would make it extremely difficult for NCTE to find investment vehicles that are consistent with the objectives of the investment policy—to provide income for Council programs and capital expenditures, and to build a reserve for temporary support of Council operations.

In discussion surrounding the investment policy change, Executive Committee members shared reservations about the current state of change in South Africa, the ongoing bloodshed, and the continued political upheaval. Some members advocated a "wait-and-see" attitude, wanting to see proof of a real democracy for all South Africans before lifting economic sanctions.

Stephan believes, however, that the political and social changes taking place in South Africa will move forward very slowly, and that help can't wait until all the changes are in place. "Sometimes you have to act when things are still in flux, so that the leaders of change can hold the line. The new government is going to have to provide economic development opportunities for all its people if change is going to be complete and successful," he said.

CALL FOR CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION OF MATERIALS IN E/LA PROGRAMS

Does your school, district, or state have a set of criteria for inclusion of books or other instructional materials—excluding textbooks—in English and language arts classes? NCTE is collecting various criteria for selection of instructional materials—works for whole-class study, lists of works for small groups or for individual reading, etc. Related policy statements, such as procedures through which selection of such material takes place within a school, are also sought. The focus is not on responding to book challenges, but on front-end procedures and criteria that can both guide initial selection and demonstrate to protesters later, if necessary, that choices of instructional materials were made in a reflective manner. Documents that you submit will be examined for possible publication of model criteria and procedures. Documents will not be returned, but if used in future publications, permissions will be sought. Send two copies and the name of an appropriate contact person to Deputy Executive Director, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

Book Releases

Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom, Eds. *Colors of a Different Horse: Rethinking Creative Writing Theory and Pedagogy*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1994, 316 pp. (Stock No. 07168-0015; NCTE members, $16.95; nonmembers, $22.95.)

Co-editor Hans Ostrom of the University of Puget Sound writes in the introduction to *Colors of a Different Horse: Rethinking Creative Writing Theory and Pedagogy* that among teachers who react to the abundance of theories which can drive classroom teaching by retreating into so-called theory-free teaching, creative writing teachers represent a disproportionate share. He and co-editor Wendy Bishop of Florida State University believe resistance to theory can lead creative writing teachers to use familiar, but not necessarily sound, teaching methods. The essays in *Colors of a Different Horse* examine what takes place in the creative writing classroom, and why.

Even the most anti-theoretical reader should not be put off by these essays, however. Written as they are by men and women who are themselves creative writers, the essays couch discussions of theory and practice in imaginative and engaging prose. In a set of essays on the creative writing workshop, for example, Eugene Garber and Jan Ramjerdi of California State University–Northridge share an exchange of letters triggered by Garber's curiosity as to how the environment of workshops changed from one of "gentle formalism" to one that is "contentious and problematical." He and Ramjerdi go on to examine the place of the writing workshop in graduate academic programs.

Subsequent essays address the theoretical contexts of creative writing; classroom practice; imagination, oral literature, and collaboration; and creative writing in a computerized world. Co-editor Wendy Bishop closes the collection with an essay in which she describes her own journey through undergraduate and graduate creative writing programs, and how it left her feeling unprepared to teach others. Bishop recalls for the reader the process by which she came to terms with the deficits her own creative writing education had left her, and how she learned to like teaching creative writing.

The book includes an exhaustive bibliography, with entries grouped in such categories as "Discourse Theories," "Journals," and "Writers on Writing." The comprehensive list of resources alone is worth the time and attention of creative writing teachers.

Dennis Baron. *Guide to Home Language Repair*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1994, 163 pp. (Stock No. 19425-0015; NCTE members, $12.95; nonmembers, $16.95.)

"Dr. Grammar" is back with an illuminating if sometimes irreverent look at the English language. Five years after his *Declining Grammar and Other Essays on the English Vocabulary* was published by NCTE, the University of Illinois' Dennis Baron examines Americans' obsession with grammar and usage, and how the flexibility and fluidity of the English language affect our notions about what is and is not correct English.

In frequent appearances on his university's public radio station, Baron calms the minds of listeners who are haunted by the possibility that their own language use, or that of their neighbors, is incorrect. He draws upon that experience in a chapter entitled "Questions and Answers," in which he responds to such compelling queries as, "Is *all right* one word or two," "Can you end a sentence with a preposition," and "Where does the comma go?"

In subsequent chapters, Baron examines such issues as whether the English language is dying, double standards and plagiarism, political correctness and language taboos, and the relevance of spelling bees in this age of spell-checkers. In an entertaining twist on top ten lists, the reader learns what Baron's "five best words of the '80s" are, as well as what he perceived to be the most important words of 1990, the best words of 1991, and new words for 1992. He comments on the increasing use of vanity phone numbers, what Baron calls "phone words" (for example, 1-800-CLUB MED), and draws an interesting analogy between zoos and dictionaries.

If this all sounds like a pretty free-ranging address on matters of the tongue, it is. But throughout the *Guide to Home Language Repair*—at each point where Baron encourages the reader to relax in the face of the seemingly redundant, such as "free gift," the objective "I," and the maddening choice between "hanged" and "hung," and to understand rather than condemn linguistic aberrations—it is clear that this free-for-all on English is being conducted by someone who clearly loves the language—past, present, and future.

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ENGLISH LEADERSHIP Quarterly

Conference on English Leadership

Leadership for Excellence

▶ IN THIS ISSUE

Case Studies in English Leadership

by Henry Kiernan, editor

Leadership is working with and through others to arrive at a common goal, the achievement of which benefits more than ourselves. Frequently, however, we do not know how to get others to buy in to what we perceive as a beneficial goal. We do not know how to engage the time, support, and efforts of others in working for the common good. Sometimes we may be able to involve others in what we perceive as important activities, while at other times we fail to do so. Yet we may not be clear about what went right in the first instance and what went wrong in the second. If we are to increase our batting average overall, we need to be able to articulate our understanding of human behavior.

To improve their batting averages, MBA candidates and prospective attorneys are trained to enter their professions by studying a variety of classic cases. As teachers and leaders we, too, often reflect on our decisions and critical incidents in our classrooms and in our schools. Yet lacking the time and perhaps an audience, we rarely commit these reflections to writing. It is rarer still to read multiple responses to our reflections from sympathetic, experienced colleagues.

This issue of the *Quarterly* brings together three case studies and several responses representing a diversity of methodological approaches, theoretical persuasions, and points of view. The contexts of these cases may vary, but they are our stories, illuminating our successes and failures, our hopes and dreams.

Daniel Heller, a supervisor at Brattleboro Union High School in Vermont, offers a success story about how a school changed its teacher evaluation program. By giving teachers the power to choose the path toward their own professional growth, a community of active learners is fostered. In their responses, Bil Chinn, Faith Delaney, and Don Shafer join in a chorus of admiration, reflect on what changes need to occur in their own schools, and raise further questions to consider.

Ted Lehmann, of Kutztown University in Pennsylvania, presents the dilemma of what happens to a change agent in a climate of suspicion and fear. Ted's courage in revealing the incidents in this story is refreshing and a necessary reminder that sometimes "leaders are born, and then un-made." Wanda Caldwell and Barry Kincaid respond with their own reflections about why people are often so frustrated with change and suggest several ways toward managing meaningful change.

Alyce Hunter, a supervisor in the West Windsor-Plainsboro District in New Jersey, presents a problematic case study that appears prophetically similar to the first-year experience described by Ted Lehmann. Alyce's story teaches us that we must create new contexts in which new initiatives can flourish. Jolene Borgese, Maureen Weaver, and Carol Smith observe, describe, and illuminate the central issues in this case. At the same time, they reveal the need to include "teacher ownership" in any reform effort.

While putting this issue together, I was struck with the overwhelming magnitude of change faced by the

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case-study writers and the respondents. These writers remind us that we can't change the world without first changing ourselves.

This is what it is all about: continuing to learn, continuing to explore, not quitting when the going gets tough. Sometimes we just hang in there for a while until there is another opportunity to act on our dream. If what we are doing is right for us and for others as well, we will find the way to carry on and achieve some measure of our goals. Passion, concern, caring, and risk are all part of the process. Ultimately, too, faith must be included: faith in ourselves, faith in the promise of being human, and faith in some cause, some vision beyond ourselves.

Speaking of vision, I would like to extend my appreciation to Jim Strickland for his devoted service to CEL, and particularly for making the *Quarterly* into the quality publication it has become. In addition, Jim eased my transition as editor by generously offering assistance and advice. On behalf of all our readers, I extend to Jim our most heartfelt thanks and our best wishes for the future. ●

CASE STUDY 1

Professional Growth through Supervision

by Daniel A. Heller
Brattleboro Union High School, Vermont

About three years ago, a committee of district administrators in the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union, Brattleboro, Vermont, recommended that teacher evaluation move to a three-year cycle, with teachers being formally evaluated once every three years. The district accepted the recommendation, and this led to interesting possibilities for district supervisors and evaluators. As chair of the English Department at Brattleboro Union High School, part of my job is the evaluation and supervision of 17 English teachers.

The new program called for teachers to engage in professional growth activities during their supervision years, those two years when they were not on the formal evaluation track. Suggestions for professional activities ranged from clinical supervision to peer supervision to almost any project the teacher might devise. Certainly any good teacher is always involved in professional growth, but this new system had an advantage. During the supervision year, no formal or summative evaluation would be placed in the teacher's file. Barring some specific incident, only a record of the teacher's development plans and a short description, written by the teacher, of what was accomplished during the year would find its way into the record.

This opened up some powerful possibilities for me as a department chair working with a group of experienced, energetic professionals. Because the terms of this new system were intentionally loose to allow maximum flexibility, I saw the chance to encourage teachers to work in a number of directions. I began by meeting with each teacher in September to set goals for the year. Typically, this kind of goal setting results in such mundane aspirations as learning more about teaching, developing new discipline skills, and the like. Under this new system, with the threat of evaluation reduced, teachers could take more interesting and personally stretching risks. Together, we could look to future programs, individual strengths and weaknesses, and career plans as we put together professional growth contracts.

Allow me, then, to relate several case studies to illustrate how successful this program can be. The contracts, achievements, and final statements of the teachers involved all attest to the three-year cycle as a powerful professional development tool which can be adjusted to meet the specific needs of the institution or individual, and ideally, of both.

At one time, we offered English in four tracks to first-year students. We decided to eliminate the general track and combine it with the college-prep track, making one college-prep level. This was to happen a year from the time of the decision. One ninth-grade teacher who taught both of these lev-

The Conference on English Leadership (CEL) of the National Council of Teachers of English is an organization dedicated to bringing together English language arts leaders to further their continuing efforts to study and improve the teaching of English language arts. The CEL reaches out to department chairs, teachers, specialists, supervisors, coordinators, and others who are responsible for shaping effective English instruction. The CEL strives to respond to the needs and interests germane to effective English instruction from kindergarten through college, within the local school, the central administration, the state, or the national level.

It is the policy of NCTE in its journals and other publications to provide a forum for the open discussion of ideas concerning the content and the teaching of English and the language arts. Publicity accorded to any particular point of view does not imply endorsement by the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, or the membership at large, except in announcements of policy where such endorsement is clearly specified.

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els had as a goal "to experiment with offering level one (college-prep) materials to level two (general) students in anticipation of combining these two levels in future years." This goal related directly to program changes and at the same time expanded this teacher's range of teaching strategies. The contract included my observing this teacher's classes for the express purpose of watching him offer these new materials to students who normally would not have had them. Here is an excerpt from the teacher's written statement of accomplishment at the end of the year:

> In an attempt to prepare myself for the impending change to heterogeneously grouped English 9 sections, I spent this year re-evaluating and modifying my English 9 curriculum to see what might work well (and what would not work well) in a combined level 1 and level 2 class. Much of what I tried, failed. Much of what I learned was learned in retrospect. However, I do feel better about the combined concept and do (now) have some strong ideas as to how to go about presenting English 9 material to classes of combined levels.

His statement explains in detail his ideas about vocabulary, journals, cooperative learning, literature, and portfolios. Giving this teacher the chance to experiment led to a fruitful and relevant study of teaching a multilevel class. All that went into the teacher's personnel file was the supervision contract and the final statement. How often have you seen a teacher willing to put a statement claiming a failed project into a personnel file? This process encouraged risk taking without fear of negative evaluation.

Another teacher was interested in teacher evaluation. For his supervision project, he proposed developing a way to include students and peers in summative evaluations, and then modeling the process. To quote from this teacher's contract, he planned "to use this year to develop a program for teacher evaluation which will include input from students, peers, and the department head." Next year, when he is on the evaluation cycle, we will actually use the instrument he develops for his evaluation.

As part of this project, I administered a questionnaire devised by this teacher to several of his classes to elicit student evaluations. Unfortunately, the peer observation part of the proposal did not work out. However, I took the information from three classroom observations and the student evaluations, and I wrote a summative evaluation. This document did not go into the file, as it was part of the supervision experiment. Subsequently, we did go through this process formally the next year when the teacher was in the evaluation mode. As it turns out, the school board is now interested in using student input in teacher evaluation, and I have been asked to help research the issue. My experiences with this teacher have become one piece of relevant information in this investigation.

A middle school teacher had as a goal "to experiment with and expand her use of learning logs." Part of her plan explained that she would "use, develop, and experiment with learning logs throughout the year. She will keep a record of these efforts . . . [she] will keep a prompt book in which there will be a record of all the writing prompts she had used in the learning logs this year. She will share this book with me."

In her end-of-the-year summary statement, this teacher wrote:

> This has truly been a year of experimentation with Learning Logs. I discovered very early that although paradigms for the Learning Log exist in the work of others, the prompts for each log entry had the most meaning and value to my students only if I created them to relate directly to the work we were doing at the time. My own prompt book has more than fifty examples of the types of entries students wrote. I discovered . . . that some units of study lent themselves more readily to the use of the log, while there were some periods, lasting several weeks or more, when the log didn't get used at all. I felt badly about that at first, until I reminded myself that this was a year of experimentation—I needed to discover when and how best to use the log, and while I have more information about this now than I did at the beginning of the year, I feel continued use and experimentation of the log would be a valuable goal for me.

Clearly, the elimination of evaluation allowed this teacher to experiment freely, and to reflect honestly on the experiment.

There have been many practical results of the program. Preparing guidebooks on teaching ninth grade, organizing a trip to London, and running the yearbook were all developed as supervision projects. The London guide has been used by teachers who have led subsequent trips. Often, the professional growth contracts called for peer observation to watch teachers skilled at the technique that someone else wanted to learn. As a condition of some contracts, teachers have kept journals which I have read and responded in periodically. For others, I have team-taught new units to help them expand the number of literary works or teaching strategies with which they felt comfortable.

In each case, teachers were freed to experiment and grow in directions meaningful to them. The obvious result of this is that allowing an individual to pursue his or her own professional goals results in the whole organization's benefiting from that teacher's productions, new knowledge, and enthusiasm. The professional dialogue around supervision issues is rich and rewarding for the teachers and for me.

At the end of the year, I devote one department meeting to teachers' sharing what they accomplished during that year. When 17 people share the projects they have accomplished, what they learned, and what they produced, the result is an impressive exchange of information. By treating people as professional adults and allowing them to take control of their own development without the fear of failure being documented and held against them, the system liberates teachers to become true professionals, an asset to their students, themselves, each other, and the school as a whole. ●

THREE RESPONSES TO DANIEL HELLER

Public Perception and Professional Growth

by Bil Chinn
Edmonton Public Schools, Alberta

Before I make any other comments about the merit of a three-year cycle for teacher evaluation, please allow me to congratulate and express my admiration (with, perhaps, a tinge of envy) to the committee of district administrators in the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union in Brattleboro for their recommendation of such a cycle and to their district for its acceptance.

Since I do not wish to appear simply to dismiss their accomplishment and to be labeled a difficult colleague, I need to explain my response. It has been composed to reflect the context in which I am currently assigned, and I wish to acknowledge that I have had to work at distancing myself and at trying on some of the attitudes I have had an opportunity to observe in this current assignment. A teacher of English language arts, I have for the last five years been assigned to the recruitment and staffing branch of personnel services with a major urban school board. My district is very conscientious about the public aspect of being a public school board. As a result, many of the ways in which we choose to approach performance management may seem more like a compromise that reflects the diverse and often conflicting needs of students and parents, taxpayers who no longer have or have never had children in the school system, and our professional association and others, rather than a process designed exclusively to address the needs and feelings of the professional in the classroom.

Although we have considered a three-year cycle and may even advocate such a plan at some point for consideration as district policy, it is my belief that such a move would not be greeted with unanimous support, and that the adoption of such a cycle would be doubtful. There are far too many people who think they know how an education ought to be delivered, as well as many more who seem consumed by concerns about how things might look and what other people might think. I remember once hearing Margaret Spencer, one of our esteemed British colleagues, talk about how important it is to know about the secrets that writers employ. This knowledge, she maintains, will assist the reader in becoming accomplished at reading and in truly enjoying the activity. I sometimes think that classroom instruction (and all that it entails) is too often viewed by our public as being a teacher's secret and, in many cases, it is. Attitudes, both from the public and from within the profession, conflict with those expressed by our colleagues who adhere to codes of professional ethics and work ideals that include the view of themselves as learners as well as teachers.

The cases cited by Daniel Heller are powerful examples of professionals who seek to analyze and improve the instructional activities they use in their various classroom assignments. And the leadership offered by Mr. Heller in encouraging and facilitating the sharing of both analysis and conclusion (in areas of success as well as those areas where further growth might be required) is admirable; perhaps it is the most outstanding aspect of their plan.

But (Ah ha! You knew there would be a *but*) . . . it might be argued that if a teacher writes and talks about "much of what I tried, failed," then that conclusion ought to be noted in the file. We know this is not necessarily so. However, the public may view this situation quite differently (their point of reference being the process by which we assess student work). All too frequently, we appear to ignore risks that students take and forget that much of what they learn is also "learned in retrospect." The critic often fails to perceive teachers' needs to experiment and learn on the job. There are still many attitudes out there, some of them possibly shared by the teacher in the next room, including one that clearly suggests that any teacher worth employing should definitely know the content and be well-versed in all the strategies necessary to teach that material ("Why were they hired in the first place?"). People with these attitudes turn a blind eye and deaf ear to research, to the impact of societal change and expectation, to any attempt on the part of the conscientious professional to accommodate individual student needs. For them, teaching is teaching is teaching . . . . They fail to understand our desire to fine-tune curriculum and learning approaches that will better meet students' exit requirements and post-secondary plans.

Similar arguments might be cited in response to the project that addresses teacher evaluation. I hesitate to suggest that this project might appear to many of the people I have described as little more than the typical "kind of goal setting result" or "mundane aspiration" engaged in prior to the three-year cycle. The fact that "the peer observation part of the proposal did not work out" is indeed unfortunate. The one part of teachers' continuing development that the public (our public, at least) seems to buy is that aspect of what teachers can learn from each other, especially what those they perceive to be bad teachers might learn from those they perceive to be good. (Is this all supposed to happen by some magic spell or incantation?) This public also seems to favor no structured process by which this learning might occur; this public fails to provide any funding to support such a process and expects (I suspect) that it is yet another of our seemingly ever-increasing professional responsibilities.

Concerning the teacher who chose to experiment with learning logs: As much as I understand our individual need to experiment for ourselves and to expand our personal use of different approaches by building on our own experiences, I might label this example a dilemma of professional development. Its content (the learning log) is the subject of much good published material that is available and is addressed by many of the leaders in our profession. (They have the luxury and opportunity to further develop learning strategies on our behalf.) With so much significant information available about learning logs and, by my recollection, with the bulk of it reaching few conclusions that differ in any way from those attributed to this teacher, the public may see little reason for further exploration. I know that her supervisory project was not wasted (and I know that *wasted* is a harsh choice of words), but I also know those who might suggest that it was. It is getting more and more difficult to justify even time being spent to find out something that appears to be already determined by someone else. I suspect that the teacher in this example learned more about herself than about any other thing and, perhaps then, this is the example that suggests (for me) the greatest value and may even demonstrate a further enhanced accountability process.

A supervision model that includes the concept of the learning log pushes teachers to remember that they, too, are still learners, that there are parts of the curriculum content they might not know everything about, and that there is much to be gained and learned even from work that might appear to themselves (initially) and to others as a failure. Until one has had some experience with salvaging, it may all just look like a lot of junk. Unfortunately, the public (again: students and their parents, non-parent taxpayers who also have a stake in public education, the elected school board officials, and even the representatives of our professional associations) don't always manage to see our needs as being as critical as theirs.

Their need varies from curriculum issues and understanding of current methodologies to their right (perceived as it might be) to receive information about performance, on formative as well as summative evaluations. I have frequently been called upon to deal with parents who are appalled by a rough draft of an assignment they have had an opportunity to view (out of context), and I have had difficulty alleviating their concern for the mistakes they see (again, out of context). Making sense of the teacher's discussion and process is difficult when neither the parent nor I were in the class at the time and when the parent has never practiced or appreciated that particular learning process in their own formative education experience. Parents may never appreciate the result; they may never see it.

What is important is that everybody is learning about themselves and about others, about learning, and about what it is like to be in an active community of learners.

Similarly, with any plan for summative performance management, I believe there will always be a group that expresses the opinion that there can never be too much accountability for teachers. The merit of this three-year supervision plan, as much as I might personally embrace it and applaud the groups that developed and then adopted it for use, escapes the skeptic. And, as much as I hate to admit this, we can all probably name colleagues and friends (much as we can recall from collective experience certain students right down to their first names and initials, height, weight, and seating assignment) who might take advantage of a three-year cycle and abuse the opportunity to be responsible for their own learning. It is my sincere hope that not all our planning has to be done on the basis of the lowest common denominator. But the system that "liberates teachers to become true professionals, an asset to their students, themselves, each other, and the school as a whole," could be a hard sell in my district. A current (and extremely divisive) provincial economic crisis is placing great strain on educational funding and organization, and is being translated (as you read this) into a reality that includes larger classes and even greater expectations for teachers. Given the limitations that one experiences in educating a disgruntled public, we are fortunate sometimes to even remember that we are indeed professional adults.

A cycle of six months, one year, three years, or five—the issue is not how often an observation or judgment is being made. Nor is it a question of whether anything is being written up or discussed, whether it is being placed in the file or not, or whether the activity under scrutiny has been tried before or not. What is important is that everybody is learning about themselves and about others, about learning, and about what it is like to be in an active community of learners. It's hard to imagine what this is like if you have never experienced it. (It's like imagining what a play might look like and what the words on the page might sound like if you have never been to the theater.) Until we learn that secret, and remember to remind ourselves of the secrets of learning, how can we possibly know whether someone else (particularly a student) is learning or not? ●

The Role of Supervision

by Faith N. Delaney
West Milford Schools, New Jersey

Reading "Professional Growth through Supervision," I was immediately struck with the simple logic and validity of the evaluative process outlined by Daniel Heller. I, too, supervise a high school English department of 17 members, in addition to a dozen middle school reading and language arts teachers. Our evaluation schedule requires two formal classroom observations each year (three for non-tenured staff) and a lengthy narrative "summary evaluation" that must be written in early April. The time frame is unvarying; first-round observations must be completed prior to the Christmas break, with the second and third rounds done by the end of February.

Several things happen as a result of this structure. Having more than 30 classroom observations to complete in addition to all of my other responsibilities as a K–12 curriculum supervisor, I am often extremely pressed for time. Rather than using my classroom visits to see a lesson which the teacher and I have planned and discussed in advance, I must frequently drop in unexpectedly when my schedule permits. Thus, my primary goal becomes checking off another name on my lengthy list. The inflexible time schedule for observations also can result in my seeing a veteran teacher doing the same lesson year after year, or sometimes watching several teachers engaged in the same unit. Last year I managed to catch three seventh-grade teachers all involved in some phase of their pre-holiday drama unit featuring *A Miracle on 34th Street*. Another eighth-grade staff member and I have a long-standing joke that the only work of literature her class ever reads is Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*.

The urgency to complete the required observations within the time limits can result in my visiting teachers when they are involved in very routine, catch-up type of lessons which, while certainly a necessary part of the instructional process, hardly represent the caliber of lesson that is the best measure of student performance or teaching strategies. Last school year, with more than 16 days lost to bad weather and few uninterrupted instructional weeks from mid-December through February, finishing the required observations became a losing battle with the calendar and the elements.

Not only does this type of evaluation lose meaning for me as a supervisor, it also can have a decidedly nonproductive effect on teachers. Word spreads quickly through the English department when I am "on the prowl," and teachers have been known to sigh with relief when I am finished and they realize they are "safe" for another several months.

> *Teachers need to change their concept of the purpose of evaluation and supervision.*

The three-year cycle being used at Brattleboro Union High School is, I am afraid, radically different from the evaluative model the teachers in my district experience. Unfortunately, our system rarely affords staff members opportunities to demonstrate their professional growth. Recently, a number of our teachers have been trained in cooperative learning, Madeline Hunter's "instructional theory into practice," learning styles research, and a number of other classroom techniques. Many of them return to the district filled with enthusiasm, eager to try out their newly acquired knowledge. As a supervisor, I encourage them to experiment in what I hope is an open and nonjudgmental atmosphere. We plan and schedule the observation and have an extensive post-observation conference. The experience for both the teacher and me is positive, constructive, and worthwhile. Unfortunately, this happens all too rarely. Heller's three-year supervision plan is an excellent model to promote risk taking and innovation on the part of the teacher and to provide sufficient time and flexibility for the supervisor to make every aspect of the evaluation process meaningful and effective.

I have had training in clinical supervision and peer coaching, and the "adult-to-adult" level of communication advocated by those methods is refreshing. If teachers truly are to become empowered professionals responsible for their own growth, supervision cannot be an exercise in top-down correction or remediation, in which administrators look for what is wrong and prescribe methods for curing a problem or repairing a defect.

Teachers, too, need to change their concept of the purpose of evaluation and supervision. When an administrator is observing a lesson, it should not increase the level of anxiety or inhibit the students' or the teachers' spontaneity. Clearly, the three-year evaluation track allows teachers not to feel under constant critical scrutiny. Developing mutual goals in a collegial relationship encourages teachers to feel free to experiment without fear of a negative evaluation much more than does the "gotcha" mentality of an abrupt appearance by a supervisor at the classroom door.

Some teachers in a more traditional supervision model feel that an observation is a measure of their performance and that administrators come to their classes expecting to see a show. Recently I was talking to a member of the high school English department to schedule my next visit to one of his classes. He invited me to see his general level junior group give oral reports about the British poets they had researched in the library. One of our colleagues quickly interrupted with, "Oh, she doesn't want to see that. How would she be able to write anything about what you're doing?" A flexible multiyear evaluation schedule would afford both the teacher and me the luxury of not worrying about whether I could find enough teacher activity to record in the evaluation narrative.

Reading Heller's description has inspired me to work to change what is wrong with the system under which the teachers in my district and I have to work. I have approached our assistant superintendent to revise both the schedule for observations and the instrument which we currently use. A narrative transcription of what takes place during the class period, with space provided for both a recommendation and a commendation, lends itself to making value judgments about the teacher's actions, rather than determining whether or not the objectives of the lesson have been met.

An evaluation model such as that described by Heller is certainly much more appealing. Naturally, I would like to ask Heller a few questions before wholeheartedly endorsing it for my own district. Did it work for all teachers? Were there any staff members who tried to use the years during which they were not being formally evaluated to do less than they might normally do? Are there not some teachers, both seasoned and neophyte, who work more effectively and even feel more comfortable with frequent formal, structured evaluations? Even if Daniel Heller has found some flaws in the three-year track, I still feel it is a far superior system to the one I must follow. I would not view infrequent formal evaluations as a reduction of the amount of work I have to do as a supervisor, but rather as refocusing and redirecting the evaluation process into one which is nonthreatening, productive, and relevant. ●

Nurturing the Bliss

by Donald M. Shafer
Fairview High School, Ohio

When I finished reading the case study "Professional Growth through Supervision," my first inclination was to apply for a job in the Brattleboro school district. Words like evaluation, inservice, and professional development are not new to me. I have had a long-standing interest in them because I believe that they are paramount to encouraging educators to grow, to change, and to continue to love their classroom teaching. I am convinced that most educators become teachers through an altruistic aspiration to inspire young people to become productive and happy human beings. In the words of Joseph Campbell, teachers find their "bliss" in the classroom. Once in the classroom, however, found bliss must be nurtured, not blunted. Professional growth and evaluation are tools that can help educators sharpen and continue their commitment to education.

Admittedly, it is difficult to sustain enthusiasm to stay in education today. Schools are attacked from all sectors of society. When one reads the morning newspaper, articles almost daily report how poorly schools educate children. The measures for successful schools have become the ever-present SAT, ACT, or in my state and in many others, the proficiency exam with scores reported in the newspaper in an attempt to measure the best district and shame the worst district. Lately, there are daily reports of violence in America's schools. With all the negativism, it is a wonder that many dedicated educators are not sent into the street looking for a different vocation.

The above digression is only to offer evidence that in many of today's schools, a negative atmosphere pervades. Part of the negative atmosphere can be attributed to the evaluation of teachers. The evaluation policy in many districts is summative, containing a written record of what happened in the classroom. It is not process-oriented, and it does not offer the classroom teacher a chance to grow. In my discussions with many teachers, it is a system that accomplishes little. The key question in this discussion, then, is how to keep good teachers in the classroom amid all of the pessimism and the inadequate evaluation systems. Heller's case study offers a possibility. It is not a panacea; it will not stop negative news nor will it put an end to the use of testing as a measure for finding good schools. It may, however, offer a way to make the classroom teacher feel good about staying in the classroom and to help sustain the bliss felt when making the career choice to become a professional educator.

After 25 years in the classroom and as a department leader, I have concluded that when teachers are empowered and inspired to become better through the kind of freedom and encouragement offered in evaluation models like the one found in this case study, educators will make their classrooms exciting places and themselves better instructors. Instruction will improve and children will learn more. The final sentence in this case study speaks volumes about keeping educators enthusiastic about teaching: "By treating people as professional adults and allowing them to take control of their own development without the fear of failure being documented and held against them, the system liberates teachers to become true professionals, an asset to their students, themselves, each other, and the school as a whole." At the heart of this concept is an important assumption. George Redford (1982), an expert in evaluation systems, says it as succinctly as it can be stated: Most people desire to improve. Teachers are surely included, judging from conversations heard at department meetings. Conferences, which are generally well attended by teachers, are designed to share information to improve instruction. Finally, professional journals are filled with suggestions to look at old lessons in new ways.

What does all of this have to do with evaluation and staff development? I believe evaluation and staff development philosophies in school systems are a measure of the school system's attitude toward its teachers. The concept of "treating people as professional adults" coupled with the belief that everyone wants to improve can make a school system better and enhance the performance of its teachers. Without going through a catalog of studies, in the 1983 *Successful Teacher Evaluation,* Thomas McGreal suggests that it is well documented that most evaluation systems do not work for a variety of reasons. They include poor teacher attitudes toward evaluation, instruments that are not reliable, or feedback mechanisms that are inadequate. I believe the most important reason teachers have a poor attitude toward evaluation is simple: They are left out of the process. The evaluator visits a classroom, makes notes, has a conference, and writes a summary of what the evaluator perceived to have happened. In this model, there is little input and not much room for real teacher improvement. In fact, it is difficult to understand the purpose of this evaluation model. It seems only to fulfill the function of evaluation.

Most school districts have an evaluation system with stated goals and procedures more complex than the one described above. Bolton (1973) states that evaluation should have as its general purpose to safeguard and improve the quality of instruction. He lists six specific functions of teacher evaluations:

1. To improve teaching through the identification of ways to change teaching systems, teaching environments, and teaching behaviors.
2. To supply information that will lead to the modification of assignments, such as placement in other positions, promotions, and termination.
3. To protect students from incompetence and teachers from unprofessional administrators.
4. To reward superior performance.
5. To validate the school system's teacher selection process.
6. To provide a basis for teachers' career planning and professional development.

All of these purposes have merit, and I do not want to suggest otherwise. Implicit in the first function, however, is a stated goal that instruction can be improved by changing teaching systems and environments. None of the other functions explicitly states that working with the teacher is the best way to improve instruction.

With this brief background, how best can an evaluation system be designed to truly improve instruction? McGreal (1983) states, "Experience shows that a positive, supportive relationship between a knowledgeable supervisor and a committed teacher is still the most effective way to improve instruction" (p. ix). This sounds very similar to the final sentence in the case study under discussion. Instruction improves when the individual teacher can work with a supervisor to define weaknesses and interests, and is evaluated on the basis of self-defined goals. Agreeing in principle with this, Redford (1982) states that "evaluation is a means, not an end. It can and should be used to alter techniques and strategies" (p. 8). Thus, defining and evaluating self-generated goals becomes a process for improving instruction. As a process, an instructor develops goals, then continues to work on them without fear that unfinished work in progress will be interpreted as a failure and noted in the permanent file.

Professional growth and evaluation are tools that can help educators sharpen and continue their commitment to education.

The idea that staff development is a process is part of the case study. The teacher who worked on new teaching strategies for the ninth-grade class admitted that he was not successful. While it was not stated, the teacher surely learned some valuable techniques, and if he returns to the same classroom, he will do a much better job. At least he knows what will not work. Further evidence that the staff development model is *process* is the three-year time limit allowed for the goal. This amount of time implies that goals cannot always be achieved in one year. It sounds as if I am a true believer of this concept. Yet there are pitfalls that should be carefully examined before embracing this staff development system.

The closest model to the staff development case study under discussion is the Practical Goal-Setting Approach or PGSA (McGreal, 1983). It is an offshoot of Redford's Performance Objective Model. According to McGreal, there are considerations that should be examined before the PGSA is implemented. The first is the goal-setting step. When the teacher and supervisor sit down together, the goal or objective that is developed should be one of quality. An example might be for a teacher to work on questioning techniques that will produce higher-order thinking. Concomitant to that, the goal or goals should be reachable and measurable.

A second problem that might exist is the supervisor's ability to get along with the teacher. Teachers may develop a goal that only "plays the game." The supervisor must have the skill to recognize this and to negotiate a better goal. The supervisor should also have time to assist the teacher in reaching a goal. The supervisor may have to visit the classroom several times to provide feedback or may have to assist in finding materials. Obviously, the staff must have confidence and trust in the supervisor to work closely with that individual. Whatever is required and whatever might develop, the supervisor must have the skill to handle it.

A final thought. One of the genuine problems for teachers trying to improve instruction under this model or any model is time. Some goals that are developed to improve instruction need time during the school year to research and implement. Goals may require radical changes in teaching. I would argue that when especially complex goals are under consideration, the teacher should be allowed to take mini-sabbaticals to develop and put these goals in place. The sabbatical might last for one or two weeks, but I think the money and the time would be well spent if the end result is instructional improvement that might benefit the whole district.

The staff development system in this case study is worthy of consideration in most districts. I believe its philosophy would improve instruction by empowering teachers to take responsibility for their improvement. In the best of circumstances, this staff development model and evaluation system has the potential to reunite the teacher with the "bliss" felt when she or he chose to become a professional educator. ●

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CASE STUDY 2

Losing the Chair: Whose Seat Is It, Anyway?

by Ted Lehmann
Kutztown University, Pennsylvania

"I need some more information. One of our board members has objected to your nomination, and we need to get more support." The voice of the assistant superintendent sounded reassuring to me, while letting me know that a dissident board member was in the business of raising some problems. Two months later, I arrived to take my new job as English coordinator in a 5,000-student district somewhere in the Middle Atlantic States and read the following headline in the local paper: "Lone Board Member Opposes English Appointment." Perhaps I should have turned around and gone home, but the optimism that taking on a new challenge generates led me to believe that I could win over the board member and lead an already strong English department to even greater heights. Five years later I drew two months of unemployment checks before receiving an emergency call from a regional state university to come fill in for an ill faculty member. The story of what happened during the five years I spent in this district provides English leaders with a cautionary tale, food for thought, and a challenge to build for change while developing for continuity. It has taken me four years to be ready to write about my experiences. With luck, you won't have to write about yours.

I believe in the power of ideas to stimulate, to activate, to move mountains. I also believe that ideas are worth talking about, arguing over, and modifying before they are turned into programs and implemented. I didn't realize, as I stepped into my post, that ideas have the power to intimidate and frighten the people at whom they are directed. To me, ideas are text and concepts to be argued over and developed and sharpened. My ideas, as much as anyone else's, need the anvil of others' thoughts to shape and mold them. I am not usually ready to go ahead with a new project until I have had a chance to work it in a forge of hot discussion. To members of my department, my ideas became shells lobbed into their comfortable country and dropped onto their intellectual cottages. My ideas became bombs that exploded in their faces and blew off . . . me.

I have never taken a job where I found myself comfortable maintaining things as they were. I usually find myself asking questions, making suggestions, working to change my own courses, looking at administrative practices and suggesting alternatives. In my interview with this district, I should have read the signs. I heard about my predecessor. I understood the clear view held by the department, the district, and the community that the English program—as it was—satisfied those who lived with it. I should have recognized that that level of satisfaction and my proclivities would not work well together.

Even before school opened, I began plowing the ground for my own downfall. I stopped in at one of the high schools to help unpack and count new books. As the blue-covered Franklin Edition of Warriner's came out of the boxes, I remarked to a young woman in my department, "I can't believe we're still using these things. I hate them." She, of course, not only loved Warriner's, but also had a deep commitment to teaching school grammar as part of her ninth-grade program. In my interview for the job, I had proclaimed that while I did not think much of formal grammar studies in English programs, I would not be coming on board as a change agent. Since I was following an incumbent of 27 years who wrote elaborate and precise curriculum guides and ruled by detail and fear, I was informed—and warned myself—that rapid change would not go over well in the staff she had assembled.

I compounded my error by announcing at my initial staff meeting on the opening day of school, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The faculty interpreted this statement as meaning I had no agenda for change. As I became familiar with the curriculum and those who were implementing it, I realized that while not much was broken, lots needed to be brought up to date before things became hopelessly antiquated. My belief in myself and my ability to overcome others' resistance remained strong, despite evidence to the contrary.

Then I found myself charged with leading the departmental effort to conduct a Middle States Evaluation and deeply involved in a controversial districtwide staff development effort based on clinical supervision. I perceived the district going in directions that suggested my desire for change might be appropriate. I failed to see that the culture of the district was more powerful than any self-study or staff development program could possibly be. And like many change agents who have left the job, I hear that the reforms and ideas I suggested have been implemented by my successor. A person entering into leadership roles should recognize that some people are destined to move on while others maintain and solidify. Some leaders may be able to do both.

To be a convincing leader for change, one also has to show the capacity to be an effective day-to-day administrator. The mundane tasks of daily administration bore me. Keeping track of book counts, projecting class sizes, ordering texts, scheduling classes, and other chores that I tend to count as administrivia turn out to be the tasks that need to be accomplished to keep teachers happy. Teachers justly complain, or worse, when they arrive for the first day of school to find insufficient books available to provide a copy for each child. Each year I spent as English coordinator, some classes would come up a few books short. While there were always good reasons for this—unexpected enrollment, changed assignments—teachers were thrown off at the beginning of the year, and I developed a reputation for being a sloppy paper clip counter. I have come to believe that if an administrator cannot properly complete tasks, other change efforts will find a much less fertile ground for planning and cultivation.

Our district's curriculum guides contained objectives concerning vocabulary that said, "Students will learn new words . . . forms of words . . . antonyms . . . synonyms . . . and be able to complete analogies." After looking at the resident vocabulary textbook, I decided to initiate an effort at change based on seeking a new way to build vocabulary skills. I selected readings in the research literature, arranged for a variety of sample textbooks, convened a committee, held meetings, assigned areas to develop expertise, and finally called a department-wide meeting to discuss the findings of the vocabulary committee. At the meeting, faculty members assigned to interpret the research managed readings that confirmed the efficacy of the vocabulary series we were already using and reported to their peers that we were doing just fine. I felt betrayed. Members of the faculty were jubilant. I learned a few lessons.

The idea to pursue vocabulary study had been mine; it had not grown from any felt need among department members to change how we taught vocabulary. Despite research evidence concerning contextuality, repetition, and the relationship of reading to vocabulary growth, faculty members were happy with the exercise-based program they already used. I had not entrenched myself fully enough to pursue a major piece of change. I had believed that teachers were as responsive to the voice of research as I think I am. I discovered, however, that many teachers are suspicious of research findings and try to twist them to justify their current practice. While the department refused to explore further the idea of general change, several individual faculty members came to me quietly asking whether they could develop alternative programs. One teacher wanted to develop a fully individualized vocabulary program that avoided teaching students words they already knew. A few wanted to develop programs drawn from the literature books they used, while two others wished to try a different vocabulary series with some of their students. I authorized these changes, provided the teachers agreed to keep their vocabulary programs in conformity with the curriculum guides.

I arrived in the district the year that Nancie Atwell's book *In the Middle* was published. In my journeys around the district, I met a fifth-grade teacher who introduced me to the writer's workshop as she had learned it from workshops with Donald Graves and his students. I then came across Atwell's book, read it, was challenged by it, and ordered four copies for the English department. At the end of the school year, I developed a routing list, asked teachers if they were willing to do some summer reading, and sent the books out. All 31 teachers agreed to engage in the summer reading; no more than six did. (In February of the following year, I learned how deeply the teachers resented being asked to do work during the summer. I felt, and thought I had communicated, that summer was the only period that teachers had time for extensive reading and reflection about their teaching.) In September, a pair of sixth-grade teachers came to me to express their enthusiasm for the writing workshop component of Atwell's book, and asked if they could implement it for their composition work. I gave permission for them to proceed.

To me, ideas are text and concepts to be argued over and developed and sharpened. My ideas, as much as anyone else's, need the anvil of others' thoughts to shape and mold them.

Both the vocabulary programs and the writing workshops blew up in my face. Teachers, particularly at the middle school level, but at other grades, too, became concerned that the district's carefully wrought curriculum was being compromised and that standards would inevitably suffer. My view was that teachers were conscientiously keeping within the guidelines of the curriculum while they sought to move toward a more integrated and thoughtful way of delivering it. By my fourth year in the district, a number of teachers had diverged into significantly different methods of delivering the curriculum. Some were reporting high levels of success. A core of teachers committed to reflective change had begun to develop in each of the four secondary schools where I provided supervision. Others continued to rationalize continuing with past practices because "the curriculum requires it" or "the children need it." They argued forcibly for bringing the more change-oriented teachers back on board because they feared how it would look for some students to be doing one kind of work while others did another. I think that at some level, they feared the community's input that would support innovation. They argued to administrators and an all-too-receptive segment of the board that I did not provide sufficient administrative controls on teachers and that the curriculum was being weakened.

Opposing sentence diagramming, supporting an unpopular but effective teacher, trying to open honors English to a broader spectrum of students, seeking to change from honors English to AP English, trying to make the literature content more inclusive and less based on the classics, trying to include young adult fiction, teaching grammar based on student writing rather than textbook exercises, trying to break down a rigid grouping system, working to develop stronger programs for those students who fall between the cracks. All these ideas fell on infertile ground and led to increasing resistance from the faculty.

Meanwhile, the composition of the board had changed. Two of the top administrators who had hired me left for other districts. The superintendent found himself increasingly isolated by the opposition of the same board member who had opposed my hiring. I had a new boss who did not support me and who welcomed the complaints of teachers in my department. By the end of my fourth year as English coordinator in the district, my new boss was able to give me an unsatisfactory rating, based on minor (to me) administrative shortcomings. In a private meeting, he intimated that he hadn't wanted to do so, but had been forced to by the superintendent responding to board imperatives. Finally, the superintendent asked me to have breakfast with him off campus. He said that I could stay a year as coordinator and be fired at the end of the year, or return to a tenured position on the faculty as an English teacher. I chose the latter, and was released the following June in a staff reduction.

While it is important to remember that I am not a good detail-oriented administrator, it is also true that during my four years in the district, only one teacher ever took exception to a teaching observation that I made. I believe I was seen as an able and fair instructional supervisor. On the other hand, I was overzealous in shoving out ideas, articles, and books intended to encourage teachers to examine their current practices and to consider other, more innovative, ones. It is more than a little possible that I was seen as being somewhat arrogant and impatient with the pace of change. Nevertheless, I believe that many of the changes I sought, and which were supported by my superiors, were starting to come. I have learned that others have arrived since my departure.

In many ways, my four years as English coordinator in the district provided me with a sense of achievement and validation for many of my ideas. Despite the fact that I was fired, I look back on much of what I accomplished as having paved the way for my successor. Nevertheless, the problems and failures I encountered grew from personal, institutional, and interpersonal conditions which made any other outcome unlikely. Given that, what lessons can others learn from my experience?

First, never look to your own mentors and supervisors to support you in the crunch. When things are going well, you can get a lot done, but understand that only the rare superior will sacrifice his or her career for yours. A corollary to this observation: If they're out to get you, they will succeed. I think I had some support from other subject-matter coordinators and from a number of people in my department. When the pressure became too great, they disappeared. The level of moral courage required to stand up to your superiors in a fight of this kind is more than most people can manage. Don't expect people to go out on a limb for you when they see how deep the saw has already cut into it.

Second, understand that some teachers are deeply afraid of autonomy, both their own and others'. And they fear change. They will fight to avoid both. Many prefer to have a person who firmly tells them what to do and who makes sure that everyone does it in relatively the same fashion. These teachers will fight with every weapon they have to oppose their colleagues who wish to further develop their teaching and the supervisors who support such change. These are not evil people, but they are frightened and insecure, and the behavior of frightened and insecure people is difficult to predict. Furthermore, as a change agent, it is important to make sure that you have support from above before beginning to move. But once that support is firm, begin change from the perceived needs of those who must implement the change. For a while, let those who must do the work pick the areas that need strengthening. As faculty become more confident of their ability to implement change, leaders can begin to suggest further areas for consideration. As the leader comes to understand both where support and tolerance of change lie in the department, ideas coming from all directions can be suggested and change can be continued in the desired direction.

Finally, as leaders we must know ourselves. Be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses. Try to organize the job to take advantage of your strengths and overcome your weaknesses. Be aware that the informal organization is more powerful than the formal one. Personality and personal style make a difference. Patience and skill in reading people's reactions and responding to them appropriately count for much in helping a leader achieve success. ●

▶ TWO RESPONSES TO TED LEHMANN

Educational Reform and Classroom Reality

by Wanda Caldwell
Tuscola High School, North Carolina

The trouble with being a leader today is that you can't be sure whether people are following you or chasing you.
—Anonymous

As a veteran of 30 years in secondary supervision and English teaching, I am noting (with much chagrin) the sometimes-silent or otherwise vocal rage coming from classroom teachers with whom I now work or meet on various occasions. Within the last five years, I have observed the latent frustration and anger toward classroom changes increase in volatility and frequency. The reasons for this attitude are as varied as the teachers who hold these opinions. In my response to this case study, I would like to share some personal observations on why some classroom teachers react in similar ways to proposed educational reform in the high school English classroom.

"*They* don't even care what I think. *They* prefer to tell me what I must do instead of asking me what will work with my kids. Then *they* hold me accountable for this." This comment is made, in one form or the other, in the halls or in teachers' lounges on a regular basis. McConaghy, a researcher who has studied educational reform efforts, notes that "the reformers of the past decade overwhelmed teachers with mandates, directives, innovations, and fads. A great wealth of teacher experience was ignored. The reform movement was and still is mainly driven by top-down decisions" (1993, p. 811). As McConaghy points out to us, "only by understanding how teachers practice their profession can we ever hope to make real changes in schools" (p. 811).

As various reformers, innovators, and administrators were complaining about resistance to change, one outstanding classroom teacher, Larry Booi, discovered that classroom teachers were very concerned about "solutions" being offered by those "politically motivated and sometimes pushed by administrators who want to give the appearance of being on the cutting edge of reform" (Booi as cited by McConaghy, 1993, p. 811). Booi chaired a Committee on Public Education and Public Practice which concluded that opposition to change occurred in many cases because teachers saw some of the changes to be good in theory but impossible to implement and be responsible for in a classroom. Their patterns of resistance to change sprang from dedication to teaching and commitment to children. As Booi noted:

> We did not hear from the mass of teachers that they were opposed to change. Rather, they were opposed to meaningless change—that is, change that did not lead to improvements in instruction or that made it more difficult to meet the needs of children. . . . Show them something that will improve their professional practice and that can be reasonably accomplished in their classrooms, and they will adopt it. But it must be *their* choices as professionals. (McConaghy, p. 812)

The sad part about desensitizing teachers to change in this manner is that genuine and needed changes are often responded to in the same manner as superfluous changes. This response pattern often catches well-intentioned leaders in a backlash of resentment. *Any* ideas become "shells lobbed into their comfortable country" when so much of life in the classroom is in flux.

"Who are these so-called experts from out-of-state who are dictating my classroom direction? When was the last time any of them were in a high school classroom?" In many cases, classroom teachers develop an imaginary "skin rash" at the mere mention of educational bureaucrats at all levels. If the cliché "Those who can't do, teach" were rewritten by classroom teachers, it would become "Those who can't handle teaching either become educational bureaucrats or sell books on how to reform the classroom." Those in policymaking positions seem to be "unmovable, outliving scandal, failure, reform movements, and all manner of politicians sent by others to clean up their mess" (Rogers, 1994). Teachers perceive themselves to be trapped in a spiral pattern, expected to produce successful students in the classroom and in life when these same students, and sometimes parents, refuse to accept personal responsibility for their own education.

Teachers are acutely aware of the origins of much educational research, emanating from the university campus. Professionals interviewed at a typical university campus commented on the process used to bring forth significant research. Joel Schwartz is quoted as saying, "Time and time again, I've seen tenure decisions made where excellence in teaching was not taken into sufficient consideration" (Blansfield, 1993, p. 21). Michael Follo stated that "the message that's being sent to junior faculty is simply that research is the most important thing" (Blansfield, p. 24). Emphasis on research is emphasized by Dean Carl Zeithgurl; he points out that "most of our really outstanding teachers, the people who get the highest evaluations and consistently win awards, are also consistently creating new knowledge" (Blansfield, p. 25).

Where necessarily does this new knowledge surface? In classrooms, of course. Whether produced for tenure or for profit, reform efforts are embraced in the school systems of America. Dr. Julio George, associate professor of education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, states succinctly, "My heart goes out to teachers. . . . They've gone through reform effort after effort with very little follow-up. Schools fail to complete one reform before another is passed. . . . You never get to home plate."

Schools that once taught basic skills are now struggling to meet children's basic needs. While schools have turned into "emergency rooms of the emotions, devoted not only to developing minds, but also to repairing hearts" (McClellan, 1994, p. 2), we must wisely select statistically proved, classroom-tested changes in our classrooms. As President Bill Clinton pointed out in his State of the Union speech, "We must be secure to change. Change must be our friend, not our enemy." By avoiding pie-in-the-sky approaches to innovation, teachers will experience meaningful follow-up and positive results in their own students and in their own classrooms. As the student becomes the center of the change effort, dedicated professional teachers will approach change in safe, secure ways.

Finally, those efforts that have succeeded in our English department and still persist have involved an instructional team effort. Principals and teachers must sit down together and exchange meaningful professional dialogue. There must exist "a deep commitment to make teachers partners in renewal at all levels" (Hechinger, 1988). There is no place in meaningful school reform for "aloof school administration" or administrators at any level who "treat teachers as though they occupied a niche only slightly above that of the students they teach" (Hechinger).

Rather, all educators need to be examining change and reform in light of the new generation of teachers who will determine where high school English classrooms will be going in the first quarter of the 21st century. Teacher effectiveness with students will depend, to a large degree, on the school environment. Genuine opportunities to develop and learn will help to foster professional growth for all teachers. School improvement, which impacts most on the students, will be the natural result of this safe, sustained effort. ●

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Building for Change

by Barry Kincaid
Raytown School District, Missouri

When I read Ted Lehmann's case study, my first reaction was that the article could have been written about my district instead of one "somewhere in the Middle Atlantic States," and I suspect that many readers of the *Quarterly* may have similar "Is that my face in the mirror?" reactions. The parallels between Lehmann's former district and experiences and mine are remarkable, except that I am—for better or worse, who knows?—still in the chair.

I am English coordinator for a district of approximately 8,000 students in suburban Kansas City. My department consists of 40 teachers (a few of whom are not full-time English, but split their schedules with other departments) in two middle schools and two senior high schools. It is fair to say that we are all growing gray together, since most of the staff have taught in the district for the major portion of their careers; during my six-year tenure as coordinator, only four new teachers have been hired.

The seniority of the staff has both benefits and drawbacks. Staff members are well-educated and have the strong degree of competence and capability that come from experience; however, many staff members are also resistant to change, and rather cynical about it, having seen educational fads come and go and knowing from experience that "what works is right." To a person, they express disdain for typical inservice programs that are three-hour dog-and-pony shows put on by some "expert" imported from the state department of education or a neighboring university. They are right, of course; it doesn't take much expertise to realize that many itinerant educational "experts" with their overhead transparencies, paradigms, and jargon haven't taught *Julius Caesar* to a class of 30 sophomores lately.

All of this leads to my point about effecting meaningful change in an entrenched and strong English department. Two sentences in Lehmann's case caught my attention and summarize my experience in leading my department to what I hope will be greener teaching pastures: "[B]egin change from the perceived needs of those who must implement the change. . . . [L]et those who must do the work pick the areas that need strengthening." My experience has been that when ideas and changes are imposed from above—by administrators, boards, state officials, or whomever—experienced teachers often react with aggressive resistance. After all, they are the ones who must teach Antony's funeral oration to 30 sophomores tomorrow; faced with that reality, they don't want to waste time absorbing another expert's educational jargon, puzzling over what outcome-based hierarchies of cognitive paradigms have to do with tomorrow's lesson, and concluding that it's all irrelevant. In short, my experience has been that teachers are willing and often eager to change when offered something practical, usable, and relevant to their needs.

My department is currently working with a consultant from the University of Kansas (yes, we're in Missouri, but KU is geographically closer than the University of Missouri) on a comprehensive assessment of our needs, with the goal of tailoring an ongoing series of inservice programs to meet those needs. So far, our project has done a great job of uncovering strengths and weaknesses we were perhaps not fully aware of, strengthening the bonds of collegiality, and providing the practical, use-it-tomorrow inservice training experienced teachers truly appreciate.

> *Our department probably feels better about itself and where it is going than it has in years. Since they have had a say in what will change and how, most of my colleagues feel comfortable and optimistic with what we are undertaking.*

The partnership with the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning began two years ago when the district administration mandated that we eliminate "basic" (i.e., lower-track) English courses from the curriculum. Our response was that we would do so as soon as we knew suitable ways to serve these students in heterogeneous classes. A committee spent a year visiting other schools and studying research literature to discover the best possible methods for reaching our goals. I should emphasize that while some teachers initially questioned the concept of deleting basic courses, everyone eventually came to agree that tracked basic classes should be dropped. However, everyone strongly opposed sudden change with no viable alternatives in place. In short, as Lehmann notes, the change must come "from the perceived needs of those who must implement the change."

In doing its research into best alternative practices, the committee happened upon a district in another part of the metropolitan area whose English department had worked with the KU Center in developing and delivering a useful and effective inservice program that helped them integrate lower-achieving students into heterogeneous classes. The committee recommended that we enter into a similar relationship, the department cautiously agreed, the administration tentatively approved, and I made the telephone call to Don Deshler at KU. It was one of the most fortunate acts of my career. Dr. Deshler and his colleagues Jean Shumaker and Jim Knight held several preliminary meetings with our committee and members of the district administration and formulated a proposed partnership between our department and the KU Center for Research on Learning. In exchange for allowing them to gather data in our district for their research, they provide us with a prolonged series of inservice training in learning strategies and content-enhancement routines tailored to the needs of our teachers as they face the challenge of absorbing students from the soon-to-be-deleted basic courses.

The first few inservice sessions did not go particularly well. Attendance (not mandatory) was not as strong as we had hoped, and at one session, the latent cynicism about new ideas erupted in an unpleasant confrontation. Apparently, the perfect solution wasn't so perfect. I now realize that we had not done what we should have: "Let those who must do the work pick the areas that need strengthening." The hero of this tale is Jim Knight of the KU Center, who—with patience, sensitivity, and an open mind—has interviewed almost every teacher in the department to determine what exactly they see as needs and what topics they would like to see covered by inservice sessions. The results of this painstaking interviewing process are gratifying. Everyone has a better understanding of our goals and reasons for change, everyone feels pleased to have had an opportunity to express his or her views, and everyone feels that they have been heard. Moreover, the interviewing process and February follow-up meetings have shown us that, although our department meetings often tend to be frank and heated, we share mutual respect and admiration for each other as professionals and people. That is, the process of determining inservice needs seems to be having the desirable side effect of soothing old wounds and hurt feelings.

At this point, Knight is planning a series of inservice presentations on topics teachers said would be helpful. Rather than being three-hour dog-and-pony shows, this inservice series will cover a year or more, with some presentations during the school year and some in the summer. There will be plenty of opportunity for teachers to have follow-up discussions about what they have learned and about what has worked and what has not. The program will be flexible enough to allow for inclusion of additional topics if teachers see a new need.

The long-range results of our efforts remain to be seen, but in the meantime, our department probably feels better about itself and where it is going than it has in years. Since they have had a say in what will change and how, most of my colleagues feel comfortable and optimistic with what we are undertaking. Although the change in curriculum was mandated from above, teachers have received it well because we are working, through our partnership with the KU Center, to meet their practical instructional needs. I think we are, to paraphrase Lehmann, building for change while maintaining continuity. ●

CASE STUDY 3

A Whole Language Vision

by Alyce Hunter
West Windsor-Plainsboro Middle School,
New Jersey

Mary Metzer is a language arts/reading/English supervisor in a kindergarten through 12th-grade suburban school district servicing about 5,000 pupils in five elementary schools (K–5), one middle school (6–8), and one high school (9–12). Mrs. Metzer's job description includes a variety of administrative and supervisory duties. She directly supervises and evaluates 14 middle-level reading and language arts teachers and 20 high school English teachers. Additionally, when asked by principals, she provides input into elementary teacher evaluations. Particularly, Mrs. Metzer is charged with the revision, initiation, and implementation of curricula.

After one year in this supervisory position, having surveyed district practices, read abundantly in current journals, and attended national workshops, Mrs. Metzer decided that the district from kindergarten through eighth grade would become a whole language, literature-based district. She reasoned that belief would follow practice; that is, once teachers saw their peers' classes experiencing the excitement of learning language, learning about language, and learning through language, all teachers would enthusiastically begin reading aloud, modeling reading and writing, and providing time for sustained silent reading and other elements of the whole language program.

Mrs. Metzer also believed that staff training and development were essential to the success of the program. She asked teachers to volunteer for different types of experiences. A major publisher of Big Books (larger-sized versions of trade books) came to talk to interested primary teachers. During and after school, Mrs. Metzer herself conducted workshops on the elements and practices of literature-based instruction. She also provided staff with the opportunity to visit teachers in other districts who were using this approach. She talked at principals' meetings, Parent-Teacher Association meetings, and to anyone who would listen about the advantages of the program. By pointing to the success of other school districts and to national research, she convinced the assistant superintendent and the superintendent to accept the whole language approach.

To Mrs. Metzer, the whole language approach meant the complete abandonment of all basals and workbooks. She was afraid that if teachers retained any of these materials, the teachers would naturally and comfortably return to using them. In June, therefore, teachers were told to box up the basals, to send home workbooks and spellers with students for summer practice, and to be ready for a most exciting and wonderful new school year.

Over the summer, Mrs. Metzer ordered a variety of real books that she gleaned from book lists provided by publishers and from bibliographies used by other school districts. In addition, she ordered selections that she had read about in journals and heard about at conferences. She eagerly looked forward to the opening of school in September.

By September 1, many of the bright and shiny paperback books had arrived. Teachers opened boxes, checked lists, and carted the books to their rooms. As soon as they opened the boxes, questions began, and consequently Mrs. Metzer's phone was ringing constantly. "When were they supposed to have the time to read each book?" "What book were they to start with?" "Where were the teacher guides?" "How come Mary had ordered only 20 copies of each book? After all, their school needs 30 copies for even one class and if the whole school is to teach the book, don't they need 120 copies?" "How were they to put the children into reading groups?" "How were they to assess students' skills and development?" "How were the teachers to fill out the required end-of-year reading cards that asked them to list student level and book according to the basal series?" "Where were the spelling books?" "Why couldn't third-grade students read *Sarah, Plain and Tall* if they were ready for it?" "Why was it on the fourth-grade list when it had traditionally been a third-grade selection?"

In response to these questions, Mary decided to hold districtwide grade-level teacher meetings to discuss the instructors' concerns. When the teachers arrived at these meetings, they were most critical not only of the whole language program but also of Mary herself. She had taken away their teachers' handbooks and now they had to spend too much time planning each lesson. As Mary tried to assuage their fears, the meetings often broke into small factions of teachers talking among themselves loudly about what a stupid idea this all was. Sometimes, teachers even shouted at Mary, accusing her of incompetence and failing to have a vision of language arts for the district.

Mary still believed that the best way for children to learn to read and write was through the integrated, whole language approach.

Parents became concerned when their children did not bring home spelling books each Monday evening. Moreover, they did not like having to spend their own time reading and writing to and with their children. They wanted workbook sheets that their offspring could do independently. Consequently, principals' phones rang repeatedly, and subsequently, the superintendent received many complaints from principals and parents. Some parents even went to the Board of Education to find out about this crazy notion of invented spelling and why the students did not have reading books. Parents of gifted and talented learners wanted to know why their children were not being treated as special and were reading books the same as all the other students.

Mary thought that she could perhaps quiet some of these complaints by inviting whole language consultants to speak to both parents and teachers. When these events took place, Mary was often embarrassed by the antagonistic attitude of both parents and teachers to these experts. How could anyone doubt that literacy was acquired through authentic reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as these experts purported?

Despite this stubborn opposition, Mary clung just as stubbornly to her belief in whole language, literature-based instruction. She continued to believe that once the teachers saw how excited the children could become about their own reading and writing, the teachers would back her attempts to bring about this change. Mary did, however, order some commercially prepared teacher guides for certain works. She also budgeted for summer curriculum work so that teachers could and would spend time processing the first year's experience and could plan for success in the future year.

Still, complaints about the program continued. Teachers wanted to be told what skill-based techniques to use for each novel. Some surreptitiously put paper over their door windows, hauled the sealed basal boxes from the school's basement, and gave the tried-and-true readers to their students instead of providing them with the real literature as Mary had directed. Parents continued to be confused about ways they could help their offspring and failed to comprehend why this program's demands were so different from the way they learned to read. After all, parents reasoned, they could read and write, and they had learned through Dick and Jane. Nothing was wrong with them. Why was the district using their children for some weird experiment? The assistant superintendent and superintendent continued to question Mary about consistency and continuity between and among grade levels. Were all fourth graders learning the same spelling words? At the start of the next school year, how would a third-grade teacher know what books students had read in grade two?

Mary admitted to herself that she had made some mistakes in the initiation and implementation of the whole language program. For example, she had not convinced a majority of the teachers of the need for the change, nor had she realized the complexity of what was required—from herself, the teachers, the parents, the superintendents, and the students—to adopt this change. Yet, the supervisor's hope was restored when she periodically received encouragement from staff who were witnessing success with whole language techniques. One second-grade teacher reported that she had finally gotten Johnny, a retainee, interested in reading by giving him a real book about trucks.

The school year dragged along, and as usual, students were given standardized tests in March. This year they were given a brand-new version of the test the district had used for the past 10 years. Mary just knew that the students would do as well as they had done in previous years. However, when the results arrived in May, she was immediately called to the superintendent's office. The test score summary sheets revealed that reading comprehension and language arts had dropped at all grade levels at all schools.

The superintendent was most distressed by a particularly significant 10-point drop in both reading and language arts scores at the first-grade level. Mary pointed out to the superintendent what she had previously told him: that testing at this grade level had proven at best insignificant, and at worst disastrous, for other whole language districts. The superintendent insisted that not testing learners at this level would have been viewed negatively by the Board of Education and the public. Both the Board and the public would say that without standardized test scores, they could not really tell how well first graders were reading. Mary patiently explained that, according to whole language theorists and practitioners, it was more developmentally appropriate and educationally significant if students at this grade loved books and employed the reading process. Mary also pointed out to the superintendent that this was the first year for administering this version of the standardized test, and perhaps teachers had not really prepared their students for this more challenging test.

The superintendent was not convinced by Mary's defense of whole language, literature-based instruction. Furthermore, the Board of Education received innumerable complaints from principals and parents about the dismal performance of students on this test. When news of the district's test score declines was featured in the local paper, community members—even those who did not have children in the schools—became concerned. Real-estate agents began questioning the superintendent about how they could be expected to sell homes in a district with such declining test scores.

Mary was summoned to a Board of Education meeting to defend the reading/language arts program. She explained to the Board that literacy learning was really taking place. Teachers who had fostered what they believed to be positive learner experiences talked to the Board. Mary brought examples of student-generated books. Yet the Board, superintendents, teachers, parents, and other community members continued to question not only the validity of the whole language program, but also Mary's judgment and competency as a supervisor. There was talk of not renewing her contract for the next year. Mary still believed that the best way for children to learn to read and write was through the integrated, whole language approach. She continued to believe and to know that the exciting and wonderful learning experiences provided through this program would result in improved reading and writing for students at all grade levels. Yet she was confused. What had she done wrong in the initiation and implementation processes? More important, what should she do now to retain the whole language approach, to improve test scores, and to keep her job as supervisor? ●

▶ THREE RESPONSES TO ALYCE HUNTER

A Long Road to Change

by Jolene A. Borgese
West Chester Area School District,
Pennsylvania

Over the years I have learned the hard way that change is slow and painful. Five years ago, I was asked to head a curriculum study committee that would eventually move a district with 10,000 students from several basals to literature-based instruction. The process was tedious, but more teacher-centered than that described in this case. In addition, there was a more crucial difference in my approach, because the teachers were part of the change. Teachers were part of the research and discovery for they, too, were reading journal articles and attending workshops. By including them in the process, it wasn't only my curriculum but theirs too, and we all had a stake in its success or failure.

Before any materials were bought or any packed away, there was ample time for committee members to be a part of several workshops on literature-based instruction both from book publishers and experts in the field (including classroom teachers from neighboring districts who were already teaching that way). Teachers were given educational articles to read and discuss and, most important, they were given a document written by two University of Pennsylvania professors (Mort Botel and Susan Lytle) on language and learning. This document, *The Pennsylvania Framework,* indicated the ways in which most people learn and how language (reading and writing) is the key component to learning. This document became a frame in which we wrote our curriculum, and we could point to its findings when defending our view to teachers, administrators, and parents. A written curriculum outlining skills to be covered, titles of books to be read in each grade, and a monitoring and evaluation tool were designed before the materials were purchased and delivered to schools. Teachers selected novels for each grade level (either the teacher would read the book to the students or the students would read the books, depending on the ability of the child) and were permitted to supplement them with various anthologies.

This was a necessary but realistic compromise for teachers who had depended on basal manuals. The anthologies provided some direction for teachers; whereas more adventurous teachers were able to use the anthologies sparingly and rely more on the required novels and then supplement them with additional books contained in the classroom libraries (or even their old favorites). Materials were bought for each grade, at each school, so that each classroom would have an ample library of required readings. Inservice was provided for teachers on how to teach literature as opposed to reading instruction. Reader response, reading journals, and novel guides were introduced and became part of the written curriculum.

As co-director of the Pennsylvania Writing Project at West Chester University, I've been a change agent for the last 15 years. Moving from traditional writing instruction to writing as a process was like a bolt of lightning to me, for I knew it was the way to go. By observing children writing, reading accounts of how writers write, attending workshops and conferences sponsored by the National Writing Project, and experiencing a writing project institute, I was convinced that writing instruction had to change in schools.

Last year I was published in the *Quarterly,* my first national publication after almost three years of talking about my idea and a year of writing and gathering information. My students, after reading my article, asked me why I wrote it. Did I get credit for it? Was I paid for it? I smiled and told them I had a story to share with other English teachers. I was inspired years ago when I heard Donald Graves tell a group of teachers at West Chester University that all children have a story to tell, we just need to ask them. My own writing reinforced my belief in the power of writing process, for some of my students wanted copies to show their parents and others wanted copies for themselves. Finally, this was my validation that I, too, knew the pain they go through when asked to write.

But I still run into brick walls. While giving inservice to teachers, administrators, and parents, I am constantly being challenged that writing as a process is a fad that will soon fade much like the "new math" (even though the National Writing Project is stronger than ever since its inception in 1974). Teachers want to hold on to their "tried-and-true" methods of teaching writing. They want to teach the way they were taught. Teaching writing as a process would mean more writing to read and more time in and out of the classroom and, for many teachers, it's time they don't have. It is scary. There is no "key" to writing; every student's writing has its own set of problems.

Even years later, teachers will still argue with me that students don't need to draft their work or all the prewriting and revision skills I teach are overkill. Students, on the other hand, find this method of teaching writing to be useful and often find their success in writing for the first time. One student even remarked, "I thought there was a mystery to writing well [he said 'good'], but now I know I can write. I just needed to know how to get started and how to fix it up." Over and over again, students of all ages in all kinds of schools have found their process when teachers guided them to write and find their own way.

Many teachers aren't writers, so they feel incompetent to teach it. Writing projects across the country have helped teachers with strategies and techniques to aid in their teaching of writing, as well as giving them opportunities to be writers. The Pennsylvania Writing Project has serviced over 7,000 teachers since 1980, and still there are many teachers who won't change, won't buy into the change, or know nothing about the process approach to writing. But I have hope because every year hundreds of teachers participate in our graduate courses, our free Saturday seminars, our summer institutes; with that, thousands more students have teachers who have bought into the change.

This is a slow and sometimes painful journey but, with time, things will change. I hope I have eased your pain, Mary. You have the right motives. Don't give up; teachers and administrators will soon understand your journey. ●

Belief Follows Practice

by Maureen M. Weaver
Ridley Middle School, Pennsylvania

Mrs. Metzer, the supervisor in this case study, is a classic example of a leader who is well-intentioned, but who is destined to fail because she is trying to do too much too soon without considering the needs and feelings of the most important element of the picture—the people who have to put her "vision" into practice. I imagine that there are many Mrs. Metzers in school districts across the country who are struggling to effect reform in their schools and wondering why teachers are just so stubborn, uncooperative, and, yes, even lazy and stupid. "Why can't teachers see what is so plain to the informed educator?" they ask. "Obviously, whole language is the way to success. All of the research says so."

As a middle school teacher with 24 years' experience and as a former department chair, I can empathize with both sides in this issue. There is no doubt that Mrs. Metzer means well, and it is understandable that she wants to immediately right all of the wrongs in the system without wasting any more time. She is convinced that her vision is the salvation of the language arts curriculum in her district.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Metzer made some very serious errors in the implementation of her plan. Her first major error was to decide unilaterally to change the entire language arts curriculum in the school district after one year of experience there. The teachers did not know her and most certainly did not trust her. Very likely, in their view, she was someone who was trying to make a name for herself by creating unnecessary work for them.

> *She should have spent time talking with teachers and in "catching them doing things right." It has been my experience that teachers respond very eagerly to praise, probably because we receive so little of it.*

Perhaps her greatest mistake was to insist on the complete abandonment of basals and workbooks. Teachers react negatively to this type of dictatorial edict. Mrs. Metzer was not only taking away the security of their lesson plans, but also implying that the way they had taught for their whole careers was totally useless. Insulting people has never been an effective way of converting them to your cause. While Mrs. Metzer was eagerly looking forward to the new school year, the teachers were feeling threatened, furious, and misunderstood. They were not about to put the required hours of work into "her" new curriculum.

Mrs. Metzer could have succeeded, in my opinion, if she had introduced her ideas in a different way. Her first year in the job should have been spent not only in reading journals and attending workshops, but in forming as many positive relationships with staff as possible. She should have spent time talking with teachers and in "catching them doing things right," just as good teachers do with their students. It has been my experience that teachers respond very eagerly to praise, probably because we receive so little of it.

Mrs. Metzer would have been wise to start small with a few teachers who were receptive to change. She should have made it clear that she valued teacher input. She was correct to conduct mini-workshops on school time, but attendance should have been voluntary at first. By courting a small group of teachers and making it worth their while to become involved, Mrs. Metzer might have had a chance to see "belief follow practice." Her small group of committed teachers would surely have converted some of their more cautious and conservative colleagues in time. As it was, Mrs. Metzer just bombarded her teachers with information and did not give them any time to absorb the changes. She should have asked teachers for their ideas and really listened to possible pitfalls from those who knew the school and the faculty better than she could, instead of barreling ahead with no one behind her and running roughshod over the very people she needed to win over. Disgruntled and angry teachers do not make good ambassadors of change.

In order to persuade people to do hours of extra work and to leave their comfort zone for the unknown, you must be able to help them to see "what's in it for them." Many dedicated teachers will work hard at change for the purely altruistic reason that they are convinced that it is beneficial to their students. The leader's job is to convince the teachers, not to dictate to them. Other teachers may have to be persuaded through "perks" such as flex time, time during the school day, or paid summer work. Other possibilities include small stipends, extra classroom materials, a special luncheon, or favorable publicity in local newspapers. As I said earlier, a little praise can go a long way with most teachers.

There is an important lesson in Mrs. Metzer's experience for anyone in a position of leadership. Real change, the kind that takes place in people's minds and hearts, takes time. Administrators must communicate with their teachers and learn to value progress in small increments. If Mrs. Metzer had started with a small group of interested teachers, made sure they felt respected and appreciated, and allowed them to pilot some of the innovations in a nonthreatening atmosphere, she would have had plenty of other teachers eager to jump on the bandwagon. Enthusiastic teachers would have made all the difference in the effectiveness of the plan. Students in these classes would have, hopefully, been going home and talking about the exciting new language arts curriculum and parents would have had time to adjust their thinking and expectations. If whole language really is the best method for teaching language arts, in time it will sell itself. The key word is *time.* ●

Banking the Fire: A Lesson in Patient Leadership

by Carol A. Smith
Moses Lake, Washington

Mary's dilemma, while an extreme example, is one often faced by progressive district leaders. When a new practice appears promising, enthusiasts single-mindedly set out to learn all they can about it, just as Mary did. They find conferences and seminars to explore topics further; they question successful practitioners; they develop plans for potential implementation. In short, they may become so immersed in their pursuit that they mistakenly perceive others' lack of immediate acceptance as foot-dragging. Despite the best of intentions and quality information, insistence that earlier techniques be abandoned completely only serves to erect another barrier to acceptance. In the past decade alone, several educational theories have emerged full-blown with accompanying jargon, usually before the last exciting trend has reached its full potential. It is little wonder that teachers are reluctant to leave behind methods which may be just beginning to make sense to them. They may well feel out of sync but unwilling to take on yet another swing of the educational pendulum, believing that this one, too, will be temporary.

As is often true in cases like this, Mary's major error in judgment was impatience. One year in a supervisory position is unlikely to be long enough to mandate sweeping changes. Credibility with both staff and the community develops over time. Small steps with shared responsibility and credit go a long way toward establishing the mutual respect necessary for productive change. Mary's cause would have been better served had she encouraged a few teachers from each site to explore the possibilities at length, just as she had. Staff should have had the opportunity to examine the whole language concept in the abstract for a length of time before being urged to accept it to the exclusion of all other views. Participation at national and regional conferences could have made a great difference in her teachers' eagerness to take leadership positions in a new enterprise. Willing staff members could have taught no-risk pilot programs in which the basals remained a viable part of the curriculum. These smaller challenges would have proved far less daunting to participants in early stages of implementation. As they became more adept at using whole language practices, perhaps the need for any basal would diminish. It is also possible that basals would continue to serve a function in a successful whole language environment—perhaps simply that of providing a structure from which to deviate as other opportunities for learning became a more comfortable fit. Certainly, participating teachers should have had time prior to the first day of school to peruse the new materials at their leisure, as well as the chance to meet with others to determine the logistics for implementation.

> *Given the encouragement to participate from the very early stages, parents can become change agents and our greatest allies. When left out, parents can be our most vocal and energetic opponents.*

Another essential component before committing to an all-or-nothing change like that proposed by Mary is that of consulting parents concerning their goals for their children. Given the encouragement to participate from the very early stages, parents can become change agents and our greatest allies. When left out, as Mary learned, parents can be our most vocal and energetic opponents. There is a kind of unintentional arrogance in assuming that we know without asking what parents hope their children will learn from us. Most would welcome a chance to share positively in their youngsters' education, some in a more active role than others, of course. If teachers struggle with new and complex ways of teaching, it is certainly understandable that parents would have reservations. Because school is a universal experience, we all hold strong opinions about how schooling should be properly accomplished. If we wish to successfully teach their children, the educational community must honor parents' convictions while attempting patiently to open their eyes to possibilities which did not exist when they attended school.

Mary took a positive step when she planned for summer curriculum work after that first stormy year. Without doubt, that time could be difficult for her, revisiting the discord of the first year's experience. However, it could be highly profitable in gaining acceptance for the program. Staff would have great incentive to seek answers for questions which had been unresolved. Plans could be made to create a structure consistent with the whole language concept, but also compatible with the perceived needs of the district's clients. The early successes teachers shared with Mary could have a positive impact on continued growth of the whole language movement in her district.

Assessment issues are thorny ones even in the most stable of situations. The commitment to standardized testing has quashed more than one promising idea. Administrators, parents, the public, and the media are understandably reluctant to be patient while we make adjustments which accommodate both changing philosophies and the need to show numerical evidence of intellectual growth. We may know that a true test of a program's merit can only be evaluated over time rather than in a single-shot, multiple-choice, high-stakes testing environment. Yet we continue to judge our school systems' effectiveness and our students' successes on that basis, even knowing that these tests generate only a partial picture of student learning. A focus for Mary's summer sessions might well be the development of systematic alternative assessment procedures, involving staff, parents, and Board members. If used as companion pieces with the mandated standardized tests, such performance-based products could help to present a clearer view to the public of the merits of whole language practice. Enlisting the aid of the local media with periodic positive publicity could make a great difference in public acceptance, especially during the time when test scores are in a state of flux. Displays of student work in places other than the school setting could generate further positive response.

Mary's quandary struck a personal chord with me. Several years ago, the Washington State Legislature selected a number of relatively new educational concepts to study. Two school districts, similar in size but with very different student populations and surroundings, were selected to explore the possibilities. As a part of a team, my role was to examine the teaching and assessment of critical thinking skills at the middle school level. With much the same excitement as Mary experienced, I set out to become as knowledgeable as possible concerning the evaluation aspect. With others, I attended international conferences, read voraciously, experimented with my students, initiated an elective class for seventh graders which focused on critical thinking skills in broad content areas, met with the other district's participants, facilitated parent meetings, and eventually based my master's program thesis on the project. I was asked to present results of our work to the State Board of Education, who responded enthusiastically with nodding of heads and probing questions. The time scheduled for discussion was quadrupled. It was heady stuff.

Much to my dismay, however, teachers in my district registered only mild interest in looking at curriculum issues from a critical thinking stance. I was, after all, one of them, hardly an educational guru of any standing or reputation. Perhaps luckily for me, I was not in a position to mandate any changes. While I felt frustrated, patience became my new best friend. Counseled by administrators to give it up, perverse stubbornness has indeed won the day. Colleagues have gradually come to me, alone and in groups, to ask questions and to share celebrations when their applications of critical thinking strategies have been successful. Five years after the project's inception, a sizable number of us are truly ready, as a team of like-minded players, to accept more innovative practices in reflection, curriculum development, and evaluation. Because the process has been slow to evolve, it has been relatively painless. Teachers have come to new ideas at a pace with which they can feel comfortable and confident in their effectiveness. The commitment and the sense of purpose is theirs, not just that of one fiery-eyed idealist. And, to be honest, much of the outcome looks quite different from my early vision of how it would turn out.

In her zeal to make whole language the sole focus of her district's language arts program, Mary simply neglected the adage that, in order to lead, one must have followers, or in this case, more than one committed leader. ●

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Memberships Available in Committee on Grading of Student Writing

A limited number of memberships in the newly constituted NCTE Committee on Grading of Student Writing will be available to interested members of the Council. A major function of the committee is to investigate alternatives to giving students grades in writing so that progress can be evaluated in ways sensitive to the needs of students as well as universities, colleges, and school districts; to organize the results of that investigation into manuscripts that help teachers and others in elementary, middle and secondary schools, and colleges and universities to understand the theory and practice of alternatives to grading; to set a timely schedule for the gathering of information and submitting of a prospectus and manuscript to the NCTE Editorial Board. If you would like to be considered for membership in this group, send a one-page letter by October 31, 1994, explaining your specific interest in the committee, your relevant background, and your present professional work to Candace Fatemi, Administrative Assistant to the Deputy Executive Director, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

Establishing a Writing Center?

If you are starting a writing center in a secondary school, or are developing an already established one, the National Writing Centers Association can help. NWCA, established in 1980, serves as a clearinghouse for the nation's writing centers on all curricular levels. NWCA provides free starter kits for schools starting a writing center. It publishes two national journals, *Writing Center Journal* and *Writing Lab Newsletter*, as well as the *National Writing Centers Directory*. For more information on joining NWCA, contact: Alan Jackson, Secretary, National Writing Centers Association, DeKalb College, 2101 Womack Road, Dunwoody, GA 30338; 404-551-3207.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Candidates for Associate Chair

(Vote for One)

IRA HAYES, Chair, English and Library Media Departments, Syosset High School, Syosset, New York. **Services to Profession:** Chair of CEL Monograph Committee; 1993 CEL Program Committee; member of NCTE Advisory Committee to Recognize Excellence in Student Literary Magazines; past president of Long Island Language Arts Council; CEL Member-at-Large; NY State English Council, secretary and NCTE liaison member of Program Committees for two conferences; NY State Education Department, member, Language Arts Advisory Board; Hofstra University, member, Advisory Board of Supervisors and Administrators. **Professional Contributions and Honors:** Published in *English Journal;* NEH Summer Seminar, 1986; received Supervisor of Excellence Award, NY State English Council, 1993; Japan Project Grant, 1993; participant in national, state, and local conferences.

Position Statement: In a world where teachers complain about large class sizes, students complain about reading assignments, parents complain about teacher/student "personality conflict," boards complain about student/teacher ratios, and administrators complain about…, I am glad for CEL. CEL has clarified my thinking on many issues, from tracking, alternative assessment, cooperative learning, to teacher evaluation. It continues to excite leaders in English education by keeping them informed of developments in theories and practices. CEL also serves as a reminder that even though we are far apart, we are always close. It would be a privilege to direct my knowledge, experience, commitment, and sense of humor to the organization.

DEBORAH SMITH MCCULLAR, Chair, Language Arts Department, and ninth-grade language arts teacher, Dean Morgan Junior High School, Casper, Wyoming. **Services to Profession:** NCTE member since 1983; CEL member since 1985; CEL Member-at-Large, 1988–91; CEL Program Chair, St. Louis, 1988; CEL Issues and Concerns Committee, 1990; CEL Hospitality Committee, 1987, 1988; presenter for NCTE, CEL, WYATE (Wyoming affiliate), CLAS (Colorado affiliate); Wyoming Governor's Conference; NCTE's Centers of Excellence for Students at Risk, 1990–92; Region 7 SLATE Steering Committee representative, 1993–present. **Professional Contributions and Honors:** Dean Morgan Teacher of the Year, 1990; guest of the U.S. Department of Education at a White House reception, 1988; reviewer for *Perfection;* department chair, 1978–present; leader of school district educational exchange to Taiwan and appointed by mayor to sister city committee (chair); consultant for Wyoming State Department of Education on Teen Leadership Coalition, a communication program for at-risk students.

Position Statement: As an organization representing language arts leaders, we must continue to give our members the opportunity for professional growth, and create an awareness of current educational trends so that we can do what is best for kids. After all, kids are the bottom line.

MARY ELLEN THORNTON, Principal, Chandler Elementary School, Kilgore, Texas. **Services to Profession:** CEL Executive Board and Membership Chair; past president, Houston Council of Teachers of English; member of CEL, NCTE, Houston CTE, Texas CTE, Kappa Delta Pi, Alpha Delta Kappa, ASCD. **Professional Contributions and Honors:** Former editor, *Houston Baptist University News;* received awards for Outstanding Volunteer Program, 1993; Woman of Distinction, ADK, 1993; Principal of the Year, Houston ISD, 1990; participant in CEL, NCTE, Texas CTE, and Houston CTE.

Position Statement: My all-level experience (Headstart through university) provides me with strong leadership skills. Most of my professional experience has been as an English teacher, chairperson, and supervisor in grades 6–12. As middle school dean of instruction, and now as principal, I recognize urgent needs as well as a great diversity among our students. Setting standards for all is difficult and political. The next century will need visionary leaders who empower and inspire. Weaving and blending the intricacies of a multicultural society will be a monumental challenge for leaders. Having actively participated in CEL since 1980 and in the Standards Project, I know I can strengthen the role of CEL in developing fresh, dynamic leadership.

Candidates for Members-at-Large

(Vote for Two)

DIANE S. ISAACS, District Coordinator of English, Reading, and Media Centers, Manhasset Public Schools, New York; Assistant Professor of English, Fordham University, Bronx. **Services to Profession:** Member of CEL, NCTE, MLA, ASA, AAUW, and ASCD. **Professional Contributions and Honors:** Published articles in *English Journal, The Harlem Renaissance—A Historical Dictionary, Fitzgerald Yearbook, Collection of New England Writers, Dictionary of Literary Biography,* and *Choice.* Outstanding NY State Teacher in Human Rights, 1991; National Endowment for the Humanities, 1989, 1990; Fulbright Fellowship, 1992; frequent presenter for NCTE (1966–94), CEL, and MLA.

Position Statement: With education increasingly under attack, we who have spent our lives building expertise in the art and business of teaching need to focus our thinking and leadership to direct the debate. CEL needs to address both the day-to-day classroom needs of teachers as well as what should be the long-range priorities of American education. I bring to CEL a diversity of background—an extensive education in both literature and education and practical experience at most levels of education—public, private, university, college, high school, middle school, teacher, administrator. The knowledge and vision needed for 21st-century education must come from ourselves and from leadership that can absorb our collective insight and share it appropriately.

JIM MAHONEY, English Department Chair, 7–12, Miller Place High School, Miller Place, New York. **Services to Profession:** Presenter at NY State English Council and Long Island Language Arts Council conferences; NCTE conference attendee since 1981; CEL presenter for the last 4 years. **Professional Contributions and Honors:** Winner of 2 CLASS Awards for exemplary curriculum units on poetry anthologies and final portfolios; NEH grants: Columbia University (1990), Union Theological Seminary (1991), 1994 and 1995 Master Teacher for NEH Institute, The Worlds of the Renaissance; a NYSEC Teacher of Excellence, 1993.

Position Statement: I am filled with awe at the thought of a leadership role in CEL. While I have strong ideas about English programs and leadership, I never considered that I might have a role in providing direction. I love NCTE and CEL, and I am restored and validated every November. It would be a joy to help others share the sense of celebration and renewal that I receive from these organizations. Frost's lines in "After Apple Picking"—*There were ten thousand fruit to touch, cherish in hand, lift down and not let fall*—always remind me of my students. Maybe the metaphor should be extended to helping other English teachers become stronger leaders.

PAT MONAHAN, Department Head, English and Communication, Downers Grove South High School, Downers Grove, Illinois. **Services to Profession:** CEL, NCTE, Illinois CTE. **Professional Contributions and Honors:** "Listening to the Rhythms and Intonations of Learning: Listening for Changes in Students' Portfolios" (ASCD); program participant in numerous NCTE and CEL conferences.

Position Statement: "I teach English," I say proudly, whenever asked. "After all, every day I get a chance to talk with kids about ideas that matter." At CEL every year, I meet teachers who share my enthusiasm. Positive, energetic, skillful, they care about their work and above all, students. In the hallways and over dinner tables, I come to know their stories. A theme soon emerges, and then a vision of what good English teaching is and what good leaders in our profession must do. Teachers who are leaders see the larger purposes of our work and seek new ways to strengthen teaching, helping teachers and children care more about the work we do in schools. As a candidate for Member-at-Large, I seek to join actively in the conversation which shapes our organization and discipline. Through our efforts, we help each other to feel a sense of purpose, a sense of direction, and most of all, a sense of our personal worth as educators.

JAMES STRICKLAND, Professor of English, Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. **Services to Profession:** Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly*, 1988–94; CEL Executive Committee, 1988–94; CCCC, 1991–present; NCTE Committee on Instructional Technology, 1988–present; Editorial Board, *Scholars* (Pennsylvania State System), 1993–present; reviewer: *English Journal*, 1994; *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 1989–present; *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*, 1990–present. **Professional Contributions and Honors:** Author, with Kathleen Strickland, of *Un-Covering the Curriculum* (Boynton/Cook), 1993. Chapters in *The Subject Is Writing, Evolving Perspectives on Computers and Composition Studies*, and *Writing On-Line*, articles in various journals, including CEL's *Quarterly;* Best Shareware Software Award, NCTE Assembly for Computers in English, 1988; numerous presentations at NCTE, CEL, and CCCC since 1983.

Position Statement: Leadership is neither a matter of appointment nor is it grade-specific. Leadership is a willingness to improve the educational environment so that students can develop as readers, writers, listeners, and speakers, and a willingness to investigate and share the latest research in the field of English studies with colleagues, administrators, policymakers, and parents. I wish to make my contribution to the profession by sharing with others in English education through my work in CEL, an organization dedicated to fostering leadership.

CEL Members to Vote on Bylaw Changes

CEL members attending the Orlando Convention will be voting on a number of proposed changes in the Bylaws of the organization. The Executive Committee has been working for the past 18 months on those changes, updating the policies which govern CEL and its functions. Copies of both the current document and the new Bylaws will be available at the opening social hour on Tuesday, November 15, and voting will take place at the annual business meeting of the Conference.

Members not attending the Orlando Convention may receive copies of the proposed changes by writing to CEL Staff Liaison, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

CEL Election Slate: 1994 Ballot

Instructions

The CEL Bylaws permit members to vote either by mail or at the CEL business session of the annual fall convention. Each member mailing a ballot should mark it and mail it in an envelope with a **return name and address** to: Susan Benjamin, Highland Park High School, 433 Vine, Highland Park, IL 60035.

Ballots must be postmarked **no later than November 1, 1994.** Members who prefer to vote at the convention will be given a ballot and an envelope at the business session of CEL. An institution with membership may designate one individual as the representative to vote on its behalf. Please list the institution name and address on the outside of the envelope.

Associate Chair (vote for one)

☐ Ira Hayes

☐ Deborah Smith McCullar

☐ Mary Ellen Thornton

☐ ____________________
(write-in candidate)

Members-at-Large (vote for two)

☐ Diane S. Isaacs

☐ Jim Mahoney

☐ Pat Monahan

☐ James Strickland

☐ ____________________
(write-in candidate)

Call for Manuscripts—Future Issues

The *English Leadership Quarterly,* a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary, secondary, or college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are always welcomed. Software reviews and book reviews related to the themes of upcoming issues are encouraged.

Recent surveys of our readers reveal these topics of interest: leadership studies, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, integrated learning, problems of rural schools, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

February 1995 (October 15, 1994, deadline)
Multicultural and Multiethnic Literature

May 1995 (January 15 deadline)
Technology and the Teaching of English

October 1995 (June 15 deadline)
Implementing Innovations

Manuscripts may be sent on 5.25" or 3.5" floppy disks with IBM-compatible ASCII files, or as traditional double-spaced typed copy. Address articles and inquiries to Henry Kiernan, Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly,* West Morris Regional High School District, Administration Building, Four Bridges Road, Chester, NJ 07930 (phone 908-879-6404, ext. 278; fax 908-879-8861). ●

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IN THIS ISSUE

National Standards: Promise and Paradox

by Henry Kiernan, editor

When the theme of this issue was first announced, the Standards Project for English Language Arts was still being funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and groups of educators were engaged in a collaborative process through the combined efforts of NCTE, the International Reading Association, and the Center for the Study of Reading. Even with the withdrawal of DOE funding, this collaborative work continues, because the promise of the standards movement lies in standards' ability to serve as the touchstone for educational equity.

Yet, national standards also present a paradox. The mere mention of standards frightens many educators. Students already are "dragged through the curriculum," and schools are required to do more and more, often with less and less. Critics remind us that "money is not the solution" to educational malaise, and calls for "vouchers" and support for "choice"—with the expectation that bringing the "free market" to education would end all our present difficulties—create consternation in the eyes of many educators.

However, it is important to remember that the movement for national standards is a broad-based one, supported by a variety of people representing all sections, classes, races, and political viewpoints. As this issue documents, an impressive group of creative, intelligent, and articulate individuals are actively involved in developing standards at the national, state, and local levels. National standards may provide the first real opportunity for schools to address the issues of student assessment and achievement and the first real opportunity for teachers to influence the agenda for educational reform. ●

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Goals 2000 Adds New Issues to the Standards Movement

by Miles Myers, NCTE Executive Director

It would be a mistake to assume that the present standards movement in the United States is the first standards movement to shape U.S. schools. The fact is that decoding/analytic literacy was embraced as the standard for U.S. English classes in a series of reports adopted in 1916; this standard proposed to bring all students into a K–12, tracked education and to teach a minimum set of basic skills to all students (Myers, in press). It also would be a mistake to assume that an English teacher at any grade level can escape the national discussion about content standards in the subject areas.

Goals 2000, passed by Congress in March 1994, mandates that there will be a National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC) which will give "a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" to one or more descriptions of subject content in each subject area (What are the curriculum content standards of the classes in each subject?), to descriptions of performance (What are the principles of assessment and what are the adequate levels of student performance?), to descriptions

NCTE National Council of Teachers of English
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of professional development (What are the essentials in the initial preparation and in the advanced preparation of teachers?), and to opportunity-to-learn standards (What resources are needed to achieve content and performance standards?). These four sets of national standards are distinct, separate projects and in many ways are not that different from the projects developed by states to describe content, performance, professional development, and school delivery or opportunity-to-learn standards. Affiliates have been working on these state projects for the last 15 years. The difference is that now these projects have become part of a national discussion, and some projects are federally funded.

At the national level, NCTE and IRA are writing content standards for the English language arts. In addition, through its work with the New Standards Project, NCTE is helping develop a portfolio assessment system; NCTE also is attempting to influence the policies of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), which is developing performance assessments of experienced teachers. These various standards projects and the questions they have raised have been described in detail elsewhere (Myers, in press) and have been critiqued in these pages (Burke, 1994).

Goals 2000 has answered some of the questions first raised by these standards projects in 1993. Goals 2000 tells us, for example, that all of these standards will be voluntary, and that state standards do not have to match the national standards certified by the NESIC. Each state must, however, adopt its own set of standards in order to receive ESEA (Title I) funds. NESIC standards, then, simply become exemplars that states may use in the development of standards for content, performance, professional development, and learning opportunity. Thus, at present, federal standards are national suggestions, not mandates.

Goals 2000 adds one new set of issues which should be of special interest to department chairs. In response to questions from teachers and others about the unequal distribution of resources in our schools, opportunity-to-learn standards have been added to the list of standards to be monitored by NESIC. The Standards Project for English Language Arts (SPELA) attempted to answer questions about learning opportunity by added information about resources throughout the SPELA document, but SPELA was criticized by the Department of Education for including opportunity-to-learn standards (then called school delivery standards). This was one of the primary reasons SPELA was terminated last spring. At the time, there was no federal recognition that school delivery standards should be developed. During the stormy months of March and April when Congress battled over school delivery and opportunity-to-learn standards, President Bill Clinton wrote a letter to South Carolina Governor Carroll A. Campbell, then co-chair of the National Goals Panel, assuring Campbell that he would veto any Goals 2000 legislation which included school delivery standards. But in conference committee, Rep. Major Owens of New York and others insisted that school delivery standards must be included in Goals 2000. The compromise was a decision to change the name from school delivery to opportunity-to-learn standards; thus, the Goals 2000 legislation the president ultimately signed did require the Secretary of Education to issue grants to develop opportunity-to-learn standards.

What are these school delivery or opportunity-to-learn (OTL) standards? One model is an outline of the resources necessary to provide the content standards. These resources include student–teacher load, books, libraries, calculators, computers, professional development, and other traditional inputs. These inputs typically have been described as generic conditions for equality in all subject areas and have not necessarily been connected to particular curriculum goals. As Elmore and Fuhrman (1993) concluded, "States already have an accumulation of input regulations that have as their essential purpose the assurance of equal access to learning" (p. 87), but these input lists, as Andrew Porter has argued, have been required by states "regardless of how they might be used" (Porter, 1994).

There are some who believe that opportunity-to-learn standards should be vision statements about content, without any listing of "inputs." This

The Conference on English Leadership (CEL) of the National Council of Teachers of English is an organization dedicated to bringing together English language arts leaders to further their continuing efforts to study and improve the teaching of English language arts. The CEL reaches out to department chairs, teachers, specialists, supervisors, coordinators, and others who are responsible for shaping effective English instruction. The CEL strives to respond to the needs and interests germane to effective English instruction from kindergarten through college, within the local school, the central administration, the state, or the national level.

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view is particularly strong among state leaders who fear that the federal government will use OTL standards to regulate the spending of state funds. This is not an imaginary fear. Some recent comments from the Secretary of Education's office suggest that, indeed, the Department of Education in the future may attempt to use NESIC to mandate that states provide particular resources. At present, states are required to have opportunity-to-learn standards, but they are not required to have them certified by the federal government.

A third model of OTL standards requires an interaction between the list of traditional inputs and the vision statement. Porter has argued that opportunity-to-learn standards must examine the interaction between the vision and resource list by providing "a vision of good practice," "empirical validation" of the vision, and "a system of school process indicators," including the resources available and the achievement of students (Porter, 1994). Says Porter, "OTL indicators can offer hypotheses by showing the relationship between various aspects of students' opportunity-to-learn and student achievement." In other words, from the interaction between resources and the vision and from the interaction between resources and student achievement should come hypotheses about why particular students are not achieving the vision. In this model, the process of monitoring OTL standards is focused on individual students and their attainment of some adequate approximation of content and performance. The new mandate for opportunity-to-learn standards will probably adopt this third model and require that resources be tied directly to particular kinds of subject content. If trade books for a classroom library are listed as essential resources, then there must be a direct connection between this classroom library and the reading needs of particular students.

The key here is attaining an adequate education, not attaining the same school or dollars. The other key is individual students at particular school sites, not aggregate data about resources or test results. A similar emphasis has been developing in the courts. Recent decisions in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama have all argued that the equity question is "Are students getting an adequate approximation of the vision of what an education should be?" Remember that *Brown v. Topeka* in 1954 argued that equity was access—are students allowed to enter the same schools?—and *Serrano v. Priest* (1977) in California argued that equity was equal dollars—do students in these classrooms, schools, or districts have the same amount of dollars spent on their education? A June 1993 decision in Alabama (*Alabama Coalition for Equity v. Governor Guy Hunt*) argued that equity was a question of adequacy—are students experiencing an education adequate enough for the 21st century?

The point is that in some situations it takes more dollars or unequal dollars to attain adequacy for individual students. First, not all students come to schools with the same needs, and not all subjects and teaching approaches cost the same amount. Second, not all opportunity-to-learn standards are the responsibility of schools. If students do not regularly attend class, then parents may be held accountable for the absence of opportunity to learn. But if the content of an English class falls far short of the vision outlined in the content standards, then perhaps the English teacher or the department is responsible for the failure of an individual student to have the opportunity to learn an adequate education. For example, a student might claim in court that one year of grammar drill sheets was a basic denial of an adequate education.

Notice that each definition of equity changes which experts appear in the legal proceedings. When equity was defined as access, as in *Brown v. Topeka,* the witnesses were experts who arrived in court with maps of school districts, bus schedules, and entrance requirements. When equity was defined as equal dollars, the experts arrived in court with testimony on the financial distribution of public money to districts, schools, and classes. Now that equity is defined as adequacy, the experts will be the department chairs and curriculum specialists who explain English standards and visions and then offer their expert judgment about the adequacy of particular programs.

In these adequacy cases, department heads may not be able to argue for general formulas for class size, teacher load, and other resources, as has been the case in the past. Department heads will be asked to argue for the adequacy of particular programs for particular students. The evidence of adequacy, of course, will be the work of these students. How is this evidence collected? It could be that in order to monitor adequacy of programs for students, an active program of teacher research may become an essential element in the policy goals of each English department or elementary grade level.

There are many uncertainties surrounding the movement to define opportunity-to-learn standards. First, such standards may or may not improve education. Policy analysts who think federal systems and mandates can capture the solutions for the complexities of local school sites are fundamentally mistaken. At the same time, local sites are not likely to improve their lot without a strong national consensus for improving schools. ●

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The Edison Project: New Standards for New Schools

by Francie Alexander, The Edison Project, New York, New York

The Edison Project is a private venture to form partnerships with public school districts in order to create new schools. The new schools are designed to keep up with the changes our children will experience in their lifetimes.

As deputy director of curriculum for The Edison Project for the past year and a half, I have been deeply involved in the development of new standards for the new schools, scheduled to open in 1995. I have learned lessons about setting standards that developers and certifiers may want to consider as national, state, and local education standards continue to evolve.

Lesson 1: Involve the Consumers of Education

Teachers, parents, students, employers, and community representatives have a special role to play in the standards-setting process. For years, teachers have been establishing standards for students in their classes. Setting standards publicly makes these implicit standards explicit. Sharing these experiences will inform efforts such as the one to develop national standards for the English language arts described by Jim Burke in the May 1994 issue of *English Leadership Quarterly*.

While working on standards for Edison schools, we engaged in a national discussion of what students should know and be able to do. Some of our most compelling advice came from the ultimate consumers of education—students. One middle school student wrote, "I think it is really important for kids this age to know that they are learning everything for a purpose, and to know how the skills they are learning fit into everyday life."

Lesson 2: Consider the Entire Curriculum

To date, national standards and most state curriculum guides have been developed on a subject-by-subject basis. As educators looked at the emerging national standards, the question "What does a fourth-grade teacher do?" was raised. It's a good question, since teachers at all levels are working toward achieving more curriculum integration. The issue is not just of interest at the elementary level, where a teacher may be more of a generalist, but also is relevant at the secondary level where subject-area teachers may work in teams and use cross-curricular themes as a mechanism for coordinated planning.

The Edison response was to develop standards by academy. While there are specific standards for each discipline, a standards book for each academy includes the standards for the arts and humanities, mathematics and science, character and ethics, physical fitness and health, practical arts and skills. The books also contain big ideas, suggestions for projects, recommended themes, and other devices for curriculum integration and for making connections among and between the disciplines.

Lesson 3: Be Concise

Perhaps teachers of English will be able to set the standard for concise, clear communication on what students should know and be able to do. In response to teacher observations that some standards documents resemble telephone books, we prepared succinct booklets.

Lesson 4: Not Standards Alone

Obviously, standards are not a reform strategy. They are a mechanism for bringing coherence to an overall improvement plan. What standards will do is demonstrated by the impact of the work of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Teachers are embracing the mathematics standards, publishers are responding with innovative materials, and assessments that embody the standards are being prepared.

The strength of The Edison Project school design lies in its comprehensiveness as expressed in the standards. Enhanced professional development opportunities for teachers and principals, attention to the quality and quantity of time, and a well-integrated technology system are the essential elements of the school plan.

> *One of the most promising movements in education is the grassroots effort to improve student assessment.*

Lesson 5: Connect Standards and Assessments

One of the most promising movements in education is the grassroots effort to improve student assessment. English teachers are leading the way in using performance tasks and portfolios in monitoring student achievement.

The Edison Project is developing a student assessment program, another essential element of the overall school design that is carefully linked to standards and instruction. The following is a description of an end-of-academy assessment, called *About Us* portfolios, that is being prepared for use at the elementary level.

> These *About Us* portfolios contain information about each student, including physical characteristics such as height as well as chemical and biological facts that are common to all humans, information about where their families come from, their preferences in music and art, their language background, and descriptions of where they live are also included. Students may also include taped interviews with

> family members, videotapes of themselves at work and play, and maps of real or imaginary journeys to distant places. As a final entry in the portfolio, they present a short illustrated talk on themselves, which is videotaped for later viewing.
>
> This assessment is deliberately structured to integrate learning while focusing on students' sense of who they are and where they fit in the American story. In addition, students demonstrate their grasp of one of the academy's big ideas: People are able to put what they learn to use.

The motto of the cooperative learning movement, "None of us is as smart as all of us," is an apt reminder of how important it is that standards-setting be a collaborative effort. The national projects are intended to be inclusive. We consulted extensively in preparing student standards for Edison schools. Because of this consultation, and in recognition of the amount of video exposure today's children experience, we developed standards for viewing as well as for reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Our advisers admired our goal that all students learn a second language and encouraged us to add world languages to the language arts section rather than to set it apart in its own foreign language section. These suggestions greatly enriched the content and presentation of the standards.

Collaboration should not end when the standards are disseminated. Rather than standardize education, the standards can be a catalyst for creating unique learning systems like the one The Edison Project aspires to be. These learning systems do not restrict options, but provide an environment in which teachers and students are viewed as constructionists.

Standards may provide the vision and inspire our efforts, but the real excitement is what teachers and students do to achieve the standards and what schools and systems can do to support their work. ●

The Language Arts Standards Project: A Professional and Community-Based Collaboration

by Charlotte Higuchi, Los Angeles Unified School District, California

This past year the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) launched a Language Arts Standards Project—a collaborative effort between teachers and administrators—with a goal of improving student learning by establishing districtwide content standards for the language arts. This Standards Project is the first stage of the district's plan to design and implement a comprehensive assessment system consistent with California's curriculum frameworks and student assessments. The LAUSD Language Arts Standards Project is also a charter member of NCTE's Standards Project. The standards developed from our project will be sent to NCTE as part of the national discussion of standards.

Each school leadership council selected a staff member and parent with a strong language arts background to serve as representatives on a committee to set content standards. Participation was voluntary. At the end of the year, school representatives of the committees evaluated the LAUSD Standards Project based on four questions. The following is a summary of the evaluations presented to the board of education.

What Did We Learn about Standards?

We learned that writing standards was a complex and difficult task that required time, commitment, dedication, and patience. Standards meant more than a minimal mastery of a goal or skill. They implied a level of acceptable proficiency. The content standards from the local standards document are "behavioral, more hands-on," while the NCTE standards are more "philosophical, inspirational."

Writing vignettes for the standards also proved challenging because most teachers have not taught to the standards. In grappling with standards, we discovered that standards taught us what students need to know.

Three important factors made the discussions valuable. First, the dialogue provided an opportunity for articulation across all the grade levels, pre-kindergarten through high school; future district activities should consider this model. Second, the inclusion of all the members of the school community—teachers, administrators, parents, classified staff, business and community members—sets the stage for an honest exchange of ideas that resulted in greater understanding and respect. Third, setting standards was real work because our experiences and knowledge mattered.

From the discussions, we learned that comparison and evaluation of the standards in the existing documents helped to clarify, consolidate, and revise the standards into one manageable set relevant for classroom teachers and parents.

What More Do We Need to Learn about Standards?

We need to study similar programs in the country or elsewhere. We need to learn how to introduce the standards for districtwide consensus, to effectively implement the standards, and to design assessments of the standards to evaluate student learning.

How Successful Were We in Involving Parents and Community Members?

Some committees enjoyed enthusiastic parent participation; others were partially successful. A more extensive parent outreach program should be implemented, and a special orientation workshop before the meetings convene would be helpful to raise the parents' comfort level. Teachers should refrain from using "eduspeak." More information needs to be translated into other languages. Parents must be included throughout the whole process.

What Are the Next Recommended Steps?

The seven standards documents must be completed. In order to gain the acceptance of districtwide implementation of standards, our colleagues need the same opportunity to meet, discuss, and explore standards as we (committee members) have had. Everyone (in over 650 schools) must feel involved in this project.

We also need to develop a curriculum aimed at effectively teaching to the standards and to design assessments accurately monitoring student progress in attaining these standards. We raise these questions:

How will standards be put into practice?

How do we train teachers and administrators?

How do we allot enough time for implementation?

How do we ensure funds, implementation, and training?

How do we inform parents and the community at large about the standards, curriculum, and assessments?

How will standards look in real life?

How can we evaluate the standards to see if the outcomes are what we expected?

Does the process of creating standards ever end?

Personal Reflections

The Language Arts Standards Project is a unique happening. It represents the first time a genuine collaborative district–union–parents–community effort has been made to identify uniform language arts standards that can be used throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District. In the past, standards have always been set strictly top down. The standards project gives us—the teachers, administrators, parents, and the whole school community—the opportunity to conduct a professional and community review of what students ought to know and be able to do.

Standards from the Draft Documents

Some of the standards excerpted here are revised from the California curriculum frameworks; others are additions. Many committee members wanted the rich cultural diversity of Los Angeles reflected in the standards:

Students read strategically by monitoring their own comprehension through predicting, questioning, revising, reviewing, and rereading.

Students read a wide range of genres written by traditional and contemporary authors who represent diverse cultures.

Students appreciate cultural and individual differences.

Students speak, read, and write a second language.

This past year, I have had the privilege of attending the regional meetings. This is what I witnessed:

The standards-setting process is a powerful unifier, a builder of communities. There is a hunger in all the school communities to do real work for real change together. The unifying effort of the process revealed itself in many ways. Committee members (both teachers and parents) shared the work. They volunteered to take work home to type and brought materials to share with others. They agreed to disagree on issues, not on personalities. The leaders ably applied the facilitation skills they learned to help the committee members reach consensus on heated issues. A teacher wrote, "Finally, we made it! We were able to air out our differences!"

When asked "What was the most helpful to you at this meeting," a parent wrote on her evaluation, "The information, attention, and the time to listen to me. It was a great meeting. Thank you for your help. It was great to be here." Another parent responded that the one word that expressed her feelings about the project was, "Welcome!"

Standards-setting defines and clarifies accountability issues for instructional reform. The standards project focuses on the teacher and student relationship—right on the issues that teachers and parents care about most, what students ought to know and be able to do. Committee members began to ask "What support do teachers need to effectively teach these standards?" Teachers are accountable for knowing how to teach and assess the standards, but they cannot do it alone. What are students accountable for? What are parents accountable for? What are administrators accountable for? What is the central district administration accountable for? What is society accountable for?

Standards-setting moves the school community forward working in concert toward a shared vision to rebuild public education. In laying out the answers to the questions of accountability, the committee members recognized how standards, curriculum, assessments, allocation of resources, and professional development are inextricably tied. A teacher wrote, "The most enjoyable part of this meeting was the way our group communicated with each other and gained knowledge from all levels of education including pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle school, high school, bilingual, special education, gifted, adult education, parents, and community and business members. Thank you for this experience. Teachers (and the

Real standards are not on paper or computer disks, but in the hearts and minds of teachers who participate in the debate.

school community) need to come together as one."

Standards-setting is professional development for teachers. Before participating in the project, many committee members thought setting standards was simple. They remarked that they had never had the opportunity to learn about, reflect upon, and discuss standards, curriculum, and assessments. A facilitator remarked, "This is the best professional development I have had." Several teachers and parents wrote on their evaluations, "Stimulating discussions . . . Time passes too quickly." Teachers want a say in planning the implementation of the standards—the curriculum taught and the assessments.

The teachers discovered that they and their colleagues have much to offer one another. As one teacher wrote, "The most helpful element at the meeting was meeting with other teachers. Once again, I'm humbled by the expertise of my colleagues."

Conclusion

This past spring, the Los Angeles Unified School District set forth the Language Arts Standards Project, a "gentle shining," bold in its vision with content standards established by a diverse group of teachers, parents, administrators, and members of the community. The Standards Project stands firm on the belief that public education can renew its vigor and regain its academic rigor with real participation from all segments of our school community. Just as the committee that planned this project had hoped and anticipated, the diversity of the committee members created a vast resource of perspectives that enriched the discussions and brought these groups together.

Our goal is to create standards that are worthy, measurable, comprehensible, and equitable for all our children. The districtwide consensus emerging from local school dialogues is crucial. Real standards are not on paper or computer disks, but in the hearts and minds of teachers who participate in the debate. ●

Looking Back: A Local Standards Project That Failed

by Larry Crapse, Florence Public School District 1, South Carolina

The current effort by NCTE and other subject organizations to develop standards, while controversial in some quarters, seems to me an admirable endeavor. While I am concerned about the logistics of implementation and the role of the federal government in this movement, I believe the creation of national standards is in the best interests of our nation in general and our students in particular.

As I read about the origins of the project and try to stay informed about the directions it is taking, I am reminded of my district's experience with the development of local standards and how numerous problems evolved. These difficulties mired the program in controversy and eventually led to its abandonment. In no sense do I intend here to suggest a relationship between my district's dilemma and what has happened or might happen at the national level. However, I think a recounting of my experiences may be beneficial to other districts in determining how to deal locally with the national standards.

In the early 1980s, my superintendent, new to his position, expressed concern that our district did not have standards for student achievement, that curriculum guides did not exist for many subjects, and that instructional methods used by many teachers reflected neither an awareness of research nor a sound theoretical base. Consequently, the superintendent developed with his staff a plan for designing and implementing standards in all subjects, in all grades. A major goal was to ensure that teachers, administrators, students, and parents knew exactly what was expected in terms of curricula for each subject, K–12. Concomitant goals included the establishment of written curricular materials, the facilitation of communication among teachers regarding course content and expectations, the improvement of instruction, and the elimination of "social promotion."

Elaborate on paper, the plan was fairly easy to understand in concept and intent. To articulate his vision and to promote support for the standards project, the superintendent called a districtwide meeting of staff members. He enthusiastically and dramatically explained the philosophy, format, and time frames for implementation of the plan. It was clear that this was to be a major effort, perhaps the most significant and concentrated one in our district's history. A master communicator, the superintendent had anticipated that some members of the audience would be skeptical and that others would demonstrate by body language, if not by voice, the "just another bureaucratic blunder" reaction. At the end of his presentation, he asked, "What are your standards now?" The uncomfortable silence that followed helped drive home his implied point that not one person in the crowd could even list the standards for achievement in any subject, let alone explain or defend them.

With the support and approval of the school board, the administration went forward with the plan. Chapter 2 funds were obtained to cover various costs involved, and a staff development director was assigned the duty of coordinating the work. In the broad sense, the project required teachers and administrators to work together to develop specific standards. In the more finite sense, this meant that committees would be formed by subject and grade levels to carry out the task. On each committee were several teachers and at least one building administrator, with a district coordinator serving as chairperson. Although some released time was granted, most of the work was done after school and on inservice days.

The committees, almost universally, started from ground zero by asking these questions: What should our students be able to know? What should they be able to do? How will we know they know and can do it? From there, other questions arose: How will particular criteria for successful accomplishment of the required tasks be set? What will be done about students who don't meet the criteria? Questions related to development and grading of tests, creation of remedial classes and materials, and communication with parents followed, all of which were discussed and, when necessary, referred to larger committees for responses. In some groups, the conversations brought forth interesting insights about teacher expectations, instructional methodology, and curricular innovation. In others, fighting for "territory" and against administrivia developed.

Once the committees had developed proposed standards, the next step was to refer the drafts to the schools for reactions from teachers and other staff. Forms were developed for written responses, and all departments distributed the drafts for examination and discussion. Comments were collected and compiled by school and sent back to the committees, which made decisions about refinement of the drafts. Revisions were sent back out for further responses. When the final copies of the standards were developed, they were sent to an executive committee consisting of principals, assistant superintendents, and others. Usually, the work was approved as submitted, but some lists *were* returned to the subject committees for further revision.

"Best Article" Award Winners

Donald A. McAndrew and C. Mark Hurlbert were honored at the Orlando convention as recipients of CEL's "Best Article" award for articles published in the *English Leadership Quarterly* during 1993. They co-wrote "Teaching Intentional Errors in Standard English: A Way to 'big smart english'," published in the May 1993 issue devoted to political considerations.

Complete details about the award will be published in the February 1995 issue of the *Quarterly*. ●

After the standards themselves were approved, the task of writing tests had to be faced. The initial attempts created much discussion and debate, for it appeared that most of the questions (multiple choice, typically) measured only lower-level, factual knowledge. Some teachers were adamant about keeping the questions as they were, while others insisted on making the items more challenging. Furthermore, some teachers wanted the questions to be content-specific ("Who is the narrator in 'The Cask of Amontillado'?"), while others wanted items that would measure application of skills to material not studied in class (for example, reading a new poem and answering questions about it). To help committee members write more effective items, a consultant was brought in for several sessions on test writing. He was also on long-term contract to meet with committees at various times during the year and to give advice to them about how to make their tests better.

As the standards project moved forward, several problems became evident, some of them growing from committee discussions and some of them only marginally related to the effort. Some areas of dissatisfaction, expressed by teachers, were:

Test Format. Many teachers felt that the multiple-choice format would result in "drill on skills" and "teaching to the test." Others felt that more holistic and long-term measures like portfolios would be more helpful than a one-time objective test.

Timing. Several teachers felt that they did not have adequate time to examine and respond to the various drafts produced and distributed. They had the impression that the whole project was moving so quickly that teachers' responses would not be seriously considered in all cases.

Content. Disagreements within and beyond the committees about what should be included and omitted in the standards and on the tests led to hard feelings and the impression that some teachers were being ruthless in advocating their own pedagogical and philosophical agendas.

Articulation. Since all committees were working simultaneously, there was little chance for teachers of different grades and subjects to compare notes, to check for overlapping content, to discuss differences in methods and materials at particular levels. Most teachers seemed to feel that more communication was essential, but they sensed that this would not be forthcoming and that the administration was overlooking the benefits inherent in such discourse.

Grading. This was perhaps the second-most-sensitive issue about which teachers voiced reservations. Since a students' grades on the end-of-year standards tests counted a significant percentage of the overall, final grade, many teachers were bothered by the weighting of the test grade, which they felt was too heavy. They were also aware that students had communicated dissatisfaction, especially in classes that, for various reasons, were not able to cover all the material addressed in the tests.

Teacher Evaluation. This appeared to be the most sensitive issue, although it was never substantially discussed by administration and teachers together. Numbers of teachers were under the impression that class profiles of test scores would be factored in, even if in a subjective way, when their principals completed performance evaluations. Teachers did not want to be held accountable for how well or poorly their students performed on a one-time administration of a multiple-choice test given near the end of the school year. Further, they did not want their classes' scores compared to other teachers' in the same department or in other schools, if such comparisons would impact on evaluation.

Perceived in totality, these concerns caused some teachers to lose interest in the project and others to become opponents of it. Gradually, certain teachers began to express their opposition in letters to their principals, the superintendent, the school board, and the media. Still others, fearing retaliation from higher powers (we are not unionized), chose to sow the seeds of their discontent in the community, thereby causing parents to question some of the logistics and philosophies behind certain decisions made in relation to test development and grading. As time went by, the project became a red-hot issue both within and outside the system. Administrators found themselves increasingly on the defensive to allay fears and deny rumors about future plans.

The politicization of the project was another problem. For several reasons unrelated to standards, support for the superintendent had grown weaker over time. Because the project was his idea from the start, teachers and parents who opposed him on other issues found the project useful as another tool for driving nails into his professional coffin.

Not long thereafter, we had a change in leadership. The new superintendent, more friendly to teachers and willing to listen to their concerns, did a personal study of the standards project and concluded that it could not succeed without adequate staff support. As a result, he recommended to the school board that the project be dismantled. The board concurred. Thus, an effort that had begun with the best of intentions was abandoned by the very authorities that had supported it just a few years before.

What are the lessons in all this for other districts? I suggest four:

Don't Be Too Hasty. In deciding how to respond to the national standards, allow time for considerate and thoughtful discourse about them. What are the advantages and disadvantages of particular standards in particular subjects? How can they be useful to you?

Consider Alternatives to Multiple-Choice Testing. Examine different methods of assessing student achievement. Think about the pros and cons of these, and decide which will be most useful and practical for you. Allow teachers to formulate recommendations. Top-down decisions in matters like this can cause trouble.

Remove the Threat of Mandatory Teacher Evaluation. Some administrators see test data as direct reflections of the quality of teachers' work on a daily basis. This view is short-sighted. If student performance on tests related to standards is to be considered at all for teacher evaluation, this should be done in conjunction with other kinds of data, like the number and kinds of books read, the amount and kinds of writing done, and the nature and quality of portfolios and projects.

Listen to Teachers. The people most affected by standards, other than students, will be the teachers. Give them chances to communicate their ideas and feelings. Show genuine interest in what they have to say. Most important, support them in their efforts to share their ideas with other teachers within the school and across the district.

I can't guarantee, of course, that these suggestions will work in every district. Too many variations in administrative philosophies and pedagogical viewpoints exist for that. I can say, however, that my experience with the local standards project that failed leads me to believe that the list above can serve as a reasonable and substantial guide. The promise inherent in the national standards is worth these precautions that might prevent the dissolution of noble efforts. Our country and our communities deserve no less than our commitment to excellence. ●

Teleconference on Standards Scheduled for Late January

"Education 2000: Standards and Assessments for World-Class Education in the English Language Arts" is the theme for a national teleconference scheduled for Friday, January 27, 1995.

The teleconference—sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English, Delaware State University, the International Reading Association, and the Department of English at Purdue University—seeks to inform educators about NCTE's current standards projects and the role of these projects in reforming American education. Participants in the teleconference will receive discussion materials and current drafts of standards produced by NCTE.

Featured speakers include Miriam Chaplin, Alan Farstrup, Miles Myers, Claire Pelton, and Tony Petrosky. Johnny Tolliver will serve as moderator. After the speakers' presentations, participants will be able to call a toll-free number or fax questions and comments.

The teleconference will be transmitted on KU and C bands at 1:00–3:00 p.m. Eastern time, Noon–2 p.m. Central, 11 a.m.–1 p.m. Mountain, and 10 a.m.–Noon Pacific. Cost for the teleconference is $125 per site.

For more information or to register for the teleconference, contact Linda Oldham, NCTE Director of Professional Development Services, at 217-328-3870, ext. 282; fax, 217-328-0977. ●

A Quick Dip in the Sea of Student Self-Assessment

by Monica A. K. Kaiwi and Elizabeth French Truesdell, Kamehameha Schools, Hawaii

Swimming freestyle laps affords ample opportunity to observe the minute movement of various muscle groups. Take, for instance, the arm motion alone. You feel your shoulder muscles lift the arm from the water behind you; then, if it's the arm on your breathing side, your eye may catch sight of a perfect arc as your arm reaches forward, digs into the water, and pulls through. One stroke of one arm is complete. But that stroke is just a small part of the whole process of swimming. Similarly, *authentic assessment* of student work is made up of many components and participants: teacher, peer, parent, and the student.

Teachers are no longer the only ones qualified to evaluate students' performance; no longer does the only view of assessment involve teachers applying a mysterious and secret set of criteria—generally clear only in the teachers' own minds—to their students' products with minimal to no explanation. For us, authentic assessment must involve the student's active and legitimate participation in the process. We believe that including and honoring self-assessment in the classroom setting helps teach life skills students will use later in all aspects of their lives.

In any activity, the person involved knows how much effort has been invested, and, generally speaking, the quality of that work in relation to what the person can do. As educators, we have no way to measure this knowledge for each student in our classes. The only way to access and validate this knowledge is to relinquish sole power of the evaluation process and entrust that relinquished power to the student. Both of us teach required 11th-grade English (American literature) and senior elective courses. Over the years we have grown to feel less and less comfortable being the only evaluators of our students' performance; it did not take long in the classroom to realize that we were not omniscient, or as fair and impartial as we had hoped. In all of our classes, we have implemented self-assessment as a significant portion of each unit's evaluation, because we believe that no assessment can be truly authentic without the students' involvement in their own evaluation.

We find that our philosophy of self-assessment relies on a foundation of self-knowledge and positive self-esteem. One problem is that as secondary school educators, we were not trained to teach these skills; we usually assume that our students have a "fixed" self-image, and though we can enhance their confidence, curriculum concerns occupy the majority of our classroom attention. With this assumed foundation in mind, we focus our approach to self-assessment on the reflection stage, which ideally leads to the student's honest evaluation of effort and product quality and assuming ultimate responsibility for that product.

Making a real commitment to the validity of self-assessment required avoiding tokenism and giving students legitimate power over their grades.

We say "ideally" because the process of self-assessment is a human one, open to all the flaws and messiness of human nature itself. Evaluations can range from self-aggrandizement ("I'm brilliant, and my paper's perfect!") to self-deprecation ("I'm stupid, and I can't write!"). Both polarities indicate the same lack of training in reflection and honest self-assessment, and they both require the same opportunity for students to be trained, to practice, and to improve in their ability to judge their own work. Many students would prefer just to turn in their work and have the teacher (read *expert*) grade it and tell them how good it is. They do not want the responsibility of judging their own efforts and work, but this skill is one of the most essential ones in which we can train them, because it has such far-reaching applications.

One of the first experiences with self-assessment in our 11th-grade course is the fall-quarter term project, which is a multigenre personal ethnicity book that includes 11 separate portions and takes six weeks to produce. The whole book is worth 350 points:

100 points: Neatness, organization, assembly, readability.
100 points: Depth of development, effort, thoughtfulness.
100 points: Self-grade.
50 points: Parent/adult response (earned by having a simple form completed by an adult).

Making a real commitment to the validity of self-assessment required avoiding tokenism and giving students legitimate power over their grades. People may deem the 100 points devoted to self-assessment too much or too little, depending on their philosophy, but we have found that many students are amazed and sometimes uncomfortable with having this much control over their grades. On the back of our self-evaluation form is space for students to give themselves a numerical grade out of 100 points, the score they think they deserve and have justified by the explanations provided on the form. A number of students refuse to give themselves a single score; they either leave the box blank or offer a range, which essentially means they refuse the responsibility of scoring themselves.

Willing or not, comfortable or not, we require that our students participate in the self-assessment process; we have found that they become more able to participate as they practice the process and gain experience with it—especially with focused questions to guide their reflection and self-evaluation. Here are the prompts we use for our first-term project self-evaluation:

- For the assignments done and graded previously: the amount of effort invested after the initial drafts were done for class (revision or extension of initial products): 1–10____ Explain:
- Amount of risk and/or experimentation illustrated by the content of the project (did you try new or especially challenging modes of communicating?): 1–10____ Explain:
- Quality of the final written products in comparison/contrast to what you are capable of doing: 1–10____ Explain:
- Attention to detail and quality of the finished product (proofreading, etc.): 1–10____ Explain:
- Amount of overall effort invested in completing this project: 1–10____ Explain:
- Approximately how much time did you invest in completing this project? ____ hours and ____ minutes.
- Written Explanation: In at least one paragraph, describe how you feel about this term project just completed. Does it reflect your best effort and abilities? If so, in what ways? If not, why not? Of what are you most proud regarding this product? Why? [One-half page is provided for the explanation.]
- [At the bottom of the page, the following appears.] Considering the answers above, what number of 100 best reflects the self-evaluation grade you deserve?____.

On the class day when the projects are due, we provide time for students to share their work with their classmates; this helps them see the range of quality generated for the same assignment and where their product falls in comparison to others. After noting these comparisons, students complete their self-evaluation forms. This sharing provides a sort of calibration of the final products, which can be a reality check for the student who thinks of a self-evaluation grade as a fast-and-easy perfect score, as well as a confidence boost for the student who tends to be too self-critical and regularly undervalues the efforts invested. We also tell our students that we will conference with students whose self-assessment scores vary widely—either high or low—from our assessment. Though probably 90% of the students' self-evaluation scores parallel the scores we give their projects, the 10% that do not tend to fall equally in the categories of too high or too low. Even after the conference, the student maintains power over the self-evaluation score. Sometimes this is difficult for us because we may not agree with the student's chosen score or the justification offered, but being committed to empowering students requires that we honor the student's decision, regardless of our opinion.

In addition to using self-assessment on term projects (such as the one discussed above that merged various assignments into a collection), we have implemented self-assessment into our specific essay assignments and literary units. Our personal goal of utilizing legitimate self-assessment with all major assignments in our classes fits into our department's goal of using portfolios that accompany a student through the secondary school career. Our department's goal for portfolios is to provide an ongoing opportunity for students to reflect on their growth in writing, critical thinking, and reading. The more practice and experience a student has with reflecting on ability, effort, and performance in the academic arena, the better the student will be at transferring these skills beyond the school environment.

We realize that despite all the merits of self-assessment, it alone does not make a complete assessment package. It must be used in conjunction with other forms of evaluation in order to create authentic assessment. Swimming is exactly the same. The strength of the arms alone must be joined by the strength of the legs to create the stroke that propels you through the water. ●

1994 CEL Election Results: Bylaw Changes Approved

At its annual meeting during the NCTE Annual Convention, held this year in Orlando, the Conference on English Leadership elected Mary Ellen Thornton of Chandler Elementary School in Kilgore, Texas, as associate chair of CEL.

Two new members-at-large were also elected at the meeting: Pat Monahan of Downers Grove South High School, Downers Grove, Illinois, and James Strickland of Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. Both of these individuals will serve three-year terms.

In other business, Diane S. Isaacs of Manhasset Public Schools and Fordham University, New York, was chosen as Membership Chair. Willa Mae Kippes, Valley High School in Gilcrest, Colorado, took her position as chair of the Nominating Committee, while Jim Mahoney of Miller Place High School, Miller Place, New York, was selected as Associate Chair of the Nominating Committee.

The bylaw changes proposed by the CEL Executive Committee were approved by the membership. Updated copies of the CEL Bylaws, reflecting the changes approved at Orlando, will be available early in 1995; write to CEL Staff Liaison, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096. ●

Call for Manuscripts—Future Issues

The English Leadership Quarterly, a publication of the NCTE Conference on English Leadership (CEL), seeks articles of 500–5,000 words on topics of interest to those in positions of leadership in departments (elementary, secondary, or college) where English is taught. Informal, firsthand accounts of successful department activities are always welcomed. Software reviews and book reviews related to the themes of upcoming issues are encouraged.

Recent surveys of our readers reveal these topics of interest: leadership studies, class size/class load, support from the business community, at-risk student programs, integrated learning, problems of rural schools, and the whole language curriculum philosophy. Short articles on these and other concerns are published in every issue. In particular, upcoming issues will have these themes:

May 1995 (January 15 deadline)
Technology and the Teaching of English

October 1995 (July 1 deadline)
Implementing Innovations

December 1995 (September 1 deadline)
Authentic Assessment

Manuscripts may be sent on 5.25" or 3.5" floppy disks with IBM-compatible ASCII files, or as traditional double-spaced typed copy. Address articles and inquiries to Henry Kiernan, Editor, *English Leadership Quarterly*, West Morris Regional High School District, Administration Building, Four Bridges Road, Chester, NJ 07930 (phone 908-879-6404, ext. 278; fax 908-879-8861). ●

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Downers Grove, IL 60516

Bill Newby
Shaker Heights High School
Shaker Heights, OH 44120

Louann Reid
Dept. of English
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523

James Strickland
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania
Slippery Rock, PA 16057

Liaison to NCTE Secondary Section Committee
Wendell Schwartz
Adlai Stevenson High School
Lincolnshire, IL 60069

Liaison to Conference on English Education
Lela DeToye
Southern Illinois University
Edwardsville, IL 62026

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Conference on English Leadership
National Council of Teachers of English
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